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André Masson: *Profile*

(Courtesy of Buchholz Gallery, Curt Valentin, New York City)

Cass Mastern's Wedding Ring*

ROBERT PENN WARREN

LONG AGO Jack Burden was a graduate student, working for his Ph.D. in American History, in the State University of his native State. This Jack Burden (of whom the present Jack Burden, *Me*, is a legal, biological, and perhaps even metaphysical continuator) lived in a slatternly apartment with two other graduate students, one industrious, stupid, unlucky, and alcoholic, and the other idle, intelligent, lucky, and alcoholic. At least they were alcoholic for a period after the first of the month, when they received the miserable check paid them by the University for their miserable work as assistant teachers. The industry and ill luck of one cancelled out against the idleness and luck of the other and they both amounted to the same thing, and they drank what they could get when they could get it. They drank because they didn't really have the slightest interest in what they were doing now and didn't have the slightest hope for the future. They could not even bear the thought of pushing on to finish their degrees, for that would mean leaving the University (leaving the first-of-the-month drunks, the yammer about "work" and "ideas" in smoke-blind rooms, the girls who staggered slightly and giggled indiscreetly on the dark stairs leading to the apartment) to go to some normal school on a sun-baked cross-roads or a junior college long on Jesus and short on funds, to go to face the stark reality of drudgery and dry-rot and prying eyes and the slow withering of the green wisp of dream which had, like some window-plant in an invalid's room, grown out of a bottle. Only the bottle hadn't had water in it. It had had something which looked like water, smelled like kerosene, and tasted like carbolic acid: one-run corn whisky.

Jack Burden lived with them, in the slatternly apartment among the unwashed dishes in the sink and on the table, the odor of stale tobacco smoke, the dirty shirts and underwear piled in corners. He even took a relish in the squalor, in the privilege of letting a last crust of buttered toast fall to the floor to lie undisturbed until the random

* This is a self-contained chapter from a novel in progress.

heel should grind it into the mud-colored carpet, in the spectacle of the fat roach moving across the cracked linoleum of the bathroom floor while he steamed in the tub. Once he had brought his mother to the apartment for tea, and she had sat on the edge of the overstuffed chair, holding a cracked cup and talking with a brittle and calculated charm out of a face which was obviously being held in shape by a profound exercise of will. She saw a roach venture out from the kitchen door. She saw one of Jack Burden's friends crush an ant on the inner lip of the sugar bowl and flick the carcass from his finger. The nail of the finger itself was not very clean. But she kept right on delivering the charm, out of the rigid face. He had to say that for her.

But afterwards, as they walked down the street, she had said: "Why do you live like that?"

"It's what I'm built for, I reckon," Jack Burden said.

"With those people," she said.

"They're all right," he said, and wondered if they were, and wondered if he was.

His mother didn't say anything for a minute, making a sharp, bright clicking on the pavement with her heels as she walked along, holding her small shoulders trimly back, carrying her famished-cheeked, blue-eyed, absolutely innocent face slightly lifted to the pulsing sunset world of April like a very expensive present the world ought to be glad even to have a look at. And back then, fifteen years ago, it was still something to look at, too. Sometimes Jack Burden (who was *Me* or what *Me* was fifteen years ago) would be proud to go into a place with her, and have people stare the way they would, and just for a minute he would be happy. But there is a lot more to everything than just walking into a hotel lobby or restaurant.

Walking along beside him, she said meditatively: "That dark-haired one—if he'd get cleaned up—he wouldn't be bad looking."

"That's what a lot of other women think," Jack Burden said, and suddenly felt a nauseated hatred of the dark-haired one, the one who had killed the ant on the sugar bowl, who had the dirty nails. But he had to go on, something in him made him go on: "Yes, and a lot of them don't even care about cleaning him up. They'll take him like he is. He's the great lover of the apartment. He put the sag in the springs of that divan we got."

"Don't be vulgar," she said, because she definitely did not like what is known as vulgarity in conversation.

"It's the truth," he said.

She didn't answer, and her heels did the bright clicking. Then

she said, "If he'd throw those awful clothes away—and get something decent."

"Yeah," Jack Burden said, "on his seventy-five dollars a month."

She looked at him now, down at his clothes. "Yours are pretty awful, too," she said.

"Are they?" Jack Burden demanded.

"I'll send you money for some decent clothes," she said.

A few days later the check came and a note telling him to get a "couple of decent suits and accessories." The check was for two hundred and fifty dollars. He did not even buy a necktie. But he and the two other men in the apartment had a wonderful blow-out, which lasted for five days, and as a result of which the industrious and unlucky one lost his job and the idle and lucky one got too sociable and, despite his luck, contracted what is quaintly known as a social disease. But nothing happened to Jack Burden, for nothing ever happened to Jack Burden, who was invulnerable. Perhaps that was the curse of Jack Burden: he was invulnerable.

So, as I have said, Jack Burden lived in the slatternly apartment with the two other graduate students, for even after being fired the unlucky, industrious one still lived in the apartment. He simply stopped paying anything but he stayed. He borrowed money for cigarettes. He sullenly ate the food the others brought in and cooked. He lay around during the day, for there was no reason to be industrious any more, ever again. Once at night, Jack Burden woke up and thought he heard the sound of sobs from the living room, where the unlucky, industrious one slept on a wall-bed. Then one day the unlucky, industrious one was not there. They never did know where he had gone, and they never heard from him again.

But before that they lived in the apartment, in an atmosphere of brotherhood and mutual understanding. They had this in common: they were all hiding. The difference was in what they were hiding from. The two others were hiding from the future, from the day when they would get degrees and leave the University. Jack Burden, however, was hiding from the present. The other two took refuge in the present. Jack Burden took refuge in the past. The other two sat in the living room and argued and drank or played cards or read, but Jack Burden was sitting, as like as not, back in his bed room before a little pine table, with the notes and papers and books before him, scarcely hearing the voices. He might come out and take a drink or take a hand of cards or argue or do any of the other things they did, but what was real was back in that bed room on the pine table.

What was back in the bed room on the pine table?

A large packet of letters, eight tattered, black-bound account books tied together with faded red tape, a photograph, 5 x 8 inches, mounted on cardboard and stained in its lower half by water, and a plain gold ring, mansized, with some engraving in it, on a loop of string. The past. Or that part of the past which had gone by the name of Cass Mastern.

Cass Mastern was one of Jack Burden's father's two maternal uncles, a brother of his mother, Lavinia Mastern, a great-uncle to Jack Burden. The other great-uncle was named Gilbert Mastern, who died in 1914, at the age of ninety-four or five, rich, a builder of railroads, a sitter on boards of directors, and left the packet of letters, the black account books, and the photograph, and a great deal of money to a grandson (and not a penny to Jack Burden). Some ten years later the heir of Gilbert Mastern, recollecting that his cousin Jack Burden, with whom he had no personal acquaintance, was a student of history, or something of the sort, sent him the packet of letters, the account books, and the photograph, asking if he, Jack Burden, thought that the enclosures were of any "financial interest" since he, the heir, had heard that libraries sometimes would pay a "fair sum for old papers and ante-bellum relics and keep-sakes." Jack Burden replied that, since Cass Mastern had been of no historical importance as an individual, it was doubtful that any library would pay more than a few dollars, if anything, for the material, and asked for instructions as to the disposition of the parcel. The heir replied that under the circumstances Jack Burden might keep the things for "sentimental reasons."

So Jack Burden made the acquaintance of Cass Mastern, his great-uncle, who had died in 1864 at a military hospital in Atlanta, who had been only a heard but forgotten name to him, and who was the pair of dark, wide-set, deep eyes which burned out of the photograph, through the dinginess and dust and across more than fifty years. The eyes, which were Cass Mastern, stared out of a long, bony face, but a young face with full lips above a rather thin, curly black beard. The lips did not seem to belong to that bony face and the burning eyes.

The young man in the picture, standing visible from the thighs up, wore a loose-fitting, shapeless jacket, too large in the collar, short in the sleeves, to show strong wrists and bony hands clasped at the waist. The thick dark hair, combed sweepingly back from the high brow, came down long and square-cut, after the fashion of time, place,

and class, almost to brush the collar of the coarse, hand-me-down-looking jacket, which was the jacket of an infantryman in the Confederate Army.

But everything in the picture, in contrast with the dark, burning eyes, seemed accidental. That jacket, however, was not accidental. It was worn as the result of calculation and anguish, in pride and self-humiliation, in the conviction that it would be worn in death. But death was not to be that quick and easy. It was to come slow and hard, in a stinking hospital in Atlanta. The last letter in the packet was not in Cass Mastern's hand. Lying in the hospital with his rotting wound, he dictated his farewell letter to his brother, Gilbert Mastern. The letter, and the last of the account books in which Cass Mastern's journal was kept, were eventually sent back home to Mississippi, and Cass Mastern was buried somewhere in Atlanta, nobody had ever known where.

It was, in a sense, proper that Cass Mastern—in the gray jacket, sweat-stiffened, and prickly like a hair shirt, which it was for him at the same time that it was the insignia of a begrudged glory—should have gone back to Georgia to rot slowly to death. For he had been born in Georgia, he and Gilbert Mastern and Lavinia Mastern, Jack Burden's grandmother, in the red hills up toward Tennessee. "I was born," the first page of the first volume of the journal said, "in a log cabin in north Georgia, in circumstances of poverty, and if in later years I have lain soft and have supped from silver, may the Lord not let die in my heart the knowledge of frost and of coarse diet. For all men come naked into the world, and in prosperity 'man is prone to evil as the sparks fly upward.'" The lines were written when Cass was a student at Transylvania College, up in Kentucky, after what he called his "darkness and trouble" had given place to the peace of God. For the journal began with an account of the "darkness and trouble"—which was a perfectly real trouble, with a dead man and a live woman and long nailscratches down Cass Mastern's bony face. "I write this down," he said in the journal, "with what truthfulness a sinner may attain unto that if ever pride is in me, of flesh or spirit, I can peruse these pages and know with shame what evil has been in me, and may be in me, for who knows what breeze may blow upon the charred log and fan up flame again?"

The impulse to write the journal sprang from the "darkness and trouble," but Cass Mastern apparently had a systematic mind, and so he went back to the beginning, to the log cabin in the red hills of Georgia. It was the older brother, Gilbert, some fifteen years

older than Cass, who lifted the family from the log cabin. Gilbert, who had run away from home when a boy and gone West to Mississippi, was well on the way to being "a cotton-snob" by the time he was twenty-seven or eight, that is, by 1850. The penniless and no doubt hungry boy walking barefoot onto the black soil of Mississippi was to become, ten or twelve years later, the master sitting the spirited roan stallion (its name was Powhatan—that from the journal) in front of the white veranda. How did Gilbert make his first dollar? Did he cut the throat of a traveller in the cane-brake? Did he black boots at an inn? It is not recorded. But he made his fortune, and sat on the white veranda and voted Whig. After the war when the white veranda was a pile of ashes and the fortune was gone, it was not surprising that Gilbert, who had made one fortune with his bare hands, out of the very air, could now, with all his experience and cunning and hardness (the hardness harder now for the four years of riding and short rations and disappointment), snatch another one, much greater than the first. If in later years he ever remembered his brother Cass and took out the last letter, the one dictated in the hospital in Atlanta, he must have mused over it with a tolerant irony. For it said: "Remember me, but without grief. If one of us is lucky, it is I. I shall have rest and I hope in the mercy of the Everlasting and in His blessed election. But you, my dear brother, are condemned to eat bread in bitterness and build on the place where the charred embers and ashes are and to make bricks without straw and to suffer in the ruin and guilt of our dear land and in the common guilt of man. In the next bed to me there is a young man from Ohio. He is dying. His moans and curses and prayers are not different from any others to be heard in this tabernacle of pain. He marched hither in his guilt as I in mine. And in the guilt of his land. May a common Salvation lift us both from the dust. And dear brother, I pray God to give you strength for what is to come." Gilbert must have smiled, looking back, for he had eaten little bread in bitterness. He had had his own kind of strength. By 1870 he was again well off. By 1875 he was rich. By 1880 he had a fortune, was living in New York, was a name, a thick, burly man, slow of movement, with a head like a block of bare granite. He had lived out of one world into another. Perhaps he was even more at home in the new than in the old. Or perhaps the Gilbert Masterns are always at home in any world. As the Cass Masterns are never at home in any world.

But to return: Jack Burden came into possession of the papers from the grandson of Gilbert Mastern. When the time came for him

to select a subject for his dissertation for his Ph.D., his professor suggested that he edit the journal and letters of Cass Mastern, and write a biographical essay, a social study based on those and other materials. So Jack Burden began his first journey into the past.

It seemed easy at first. It was easy to reconstruct the life of the log cabin in the red hills. There were the first letters back from Gilbert, after he had begun his rise (Jack Burden managed to get possession of the other Gilbert Mastern papers of the period before the Civil War). There was the known pattern of that life, gradually altered toward comfort as Gilbert's affluence was felt at that distance. Then, in one season, the mother and father died, and Gilbert returned to burst, no doubt, upon Cass and Lavinia as an unbelievable vision, a splendid imposter in black broadcloth, varnished boots, white linen, heavy gold ring. He put Lavinia in a school in Atlanta, bought her trunks of dresses, and kissed her goodbye. ("Could you not have taken me with you, dear Brother Gilbert? I would have been ever so dutiful and affectionate a sister," so she wrote to him, in the copy-book hand, in brown ink, in a language not her own, a language of school-room propriety. "May I not come to you now? Is there no little task which I—" But Gilbert had other plans. When the time came for her to appear in his house she would be ready.) But he took Cass with him, a hobbledehoy now wearing black and mounted on a blooded mare.

At the end of three years Cass was not a hobbledehoy. He had spent three years of monastic rigor at *Valhalla*, Gilbert's house, under the tuition of a Mr. Lawson and of Gilbert himself. From Gilbert he learned the routine of plantation management. From Mr. Lawson, a tubercular and vague young man from Princeton, New Jersey, he learned some geometry, some Latin, and a great deal of Presbyterian theology. He liked the books, and once Gilbert (so the journal said) stood in the doorway and watched him bent over the table and then said, "At least you may be good for *that*."

But he was good for more than that. When Gilbert gave him a small plantation, he managed it for two years with such astuteness (and such luck, for both season and market conspired in his behalf) that at the end of the time he could repay Gilbert a substantial part of the purchase price. Then he went, or was sent, to Transylvania. It was Gilbert's idea. He came into the house on Cass's plantation one night to find Cass at his books. He walked across the room to the table where the books lay, by which Cass now stood. Gilbert stretched out his arm and tapped the open book with his riding crop. "You might make something out of that," he said. The journal reported

that, but it did not report what book it was that Gilbert's riding crop tapped. It is not important what book it was. Or perhaps it is important, for something in our mind, in our imagination, wants to know the fact. We see the red, square, strong hand ("My brother is strong-made and florid") protruding from the white cuff, grasping the crop which in that grasp looks fragile like a twig. We see the flick of the little leather loop on the open page, a flick brisk, not quite contemptuous, but we cannot make out the page.

In any case, it probably was not a book on theology, for it seems doubtful that Gilbert, in such a case, would have used the phrase "make something out of that." It might have been a page of the Latin poets, however, for Gilbert would have discovered that, in small doses, they went well with politics or the law. So Transylvania College it was to be, suggested, it developed, by Gilbert's neighbor and friend, Mr. Davis, Mr. Jefferson Davis, who had once been a student there. Mr. Davis had studied Greek.

At Transylvania, in Lexington, Cass discovered pleasure. "I discovered that there is an education for vice as well as for virtue, and I learned what was to be learned from the gaming table, the bottle, and the racecourse, and from the illicit sweetness of the flesh." He had come out of the poverty of the cabin and the monastic regime of *Valhalla* and the responsibilities of his own little plantation; and he was tall and strong and, to judge from the photograph, well favored, with the burning dark eyes. It was no wonder that he "discovered pleasure"—or that pleasure discovered him. For, though the journal does not say so, in the events leading up to the "darkness and trouble," Cass seems to have been, in the beginning at least, the pursued rather than the pursuer.

The pursuer is referred to in the journal as "She" and "Her." But I learned the name. "She" was Annabelle Trice, Mrs. Duncan Trice, and Mr. Duncan Trice was a prosperous young banker of Lexington, Kentucky, who was an intimate of Cass Master and apparently one of those who led him into the paths of pleasure. I learned the name by going back to the files of the Lexington newspapers for the middle 1850's to locate the story of a death. It was the death of Mr. Duncan Trice. In the newspaper it was reported as an accident. Duncan Trice had shot himself by accident, the newspaper said, while cleaning a pair of pistols. One of the pistols, already cleaned, lay on the couch where he had been sitting, in his library, at the time of the accident. The other, the lethal instrument, had fallen to the floor. I had known, from the journal, the nature of the case, and when I

had located the special circumstances, I had learned the identity of "She." Mr. Trice, the newspaper said, was survived by his widow, née Annabelle Puckett, of Washington, D. C.

Shortly after Cass had come to Lexington, Annabelle Trice met him. Duncan Trice brought him home, for he had received a letter from Mr. Davis, recommending the brother of his good friend and neighbor, Mr. Gilbert Mastern. (Duncan Trice had come to Lexington from Southern Kentucky, where his own father had been a friend of Samuel Davis, the father of Jefferson, when Samuel lived at Fairview and bred racers.) So Duncan Trice brought the tall boy home, who was no longer a hobbledehoy, and set him on a sofa and thrust a glass into his hand and called in his pretty, husky-voiced wife, of whom he was so proud, to greet the stranger. "When she first entered the room, in which the shades of approaching twilight were gathering though the hour for the candles to be lit had scarcely come, I thought that her eyes were black, and the effect was most striking, her hair being of such a fairness. I noticed, too, how softly she trod and with a gliding motion which, though she was perhaps of a little less than moderate stature, gave an impression of regal dignity—

*et avertens rosea cervice refulsit
ambrosiaequae comae divinum vertice odorem
spiravere, pedes vestis defluxit ad imos,
et vera incessu patuit dea.*

So the Mantuan said, when Venus appeared and the true goddess was revealed by her gait. She came into the room and was the true goddess as revealed in her movement, and was, but for Divine Grace (if such be granted to a parcel of corruption such as I), my true damnation. She gave me her hand and spoke with a tingling huskiness which made me think of rubbing my hand upon a soft deep-piled cloth, like velvet, or upon a fur. It would not have been called a musical voice such as is generally admired. I know that, but I can only set down what effect it worked upon my own organs of hearing."

Was she beautiful? Well, Cass set down a very conscientious description of every feature and proportion, a kind of tortured inventory, as though in the midst of the "darkness and trouble," at the very moment of his agony and repudiation, he had to take one last backward look even at the risk of being turned into the pillar of salt. "Her face was not large though a little given to fullness. Her mouth was strong but the lips were red and moist and seemed to be slightly parted or about to part themselves. The chin was short and firmly moulded. Her skin was of a great whiteness, it seemed then before the candles

were lit, but afterwards I was to see that it had a bloom of color upon it. Her hair, which was in a remarkable abundance and of great fairness was drawn back from her face and worn in large coils low down to the neck. Her waist was very small and her breasts, which seemed naturally high and round and full, were the higher for the corsetting. Her dress, of a dark blue silk, I remember, was cut low to the very downward curve of the shoulders, and in the front showed how the breasts were lifted like twin orbs."

Cass described her that way. He admitted that her face was not beautiful. "Though agreeable in its proportions," he added. But the hair was beautiful, and "of an astonishing softness, upon your hand softer and finer than your thought of silk." So even in that moment, in the midst of the "darkness and trouble," the recollection intrudes into the journal of how that abundant, fair hair had slipped across his fingers. "But," he added, "her beauty was her eyes."

He had remarked how, when she first came in, into the shadowy room, her eyes had seemed black. But he had been mistaken, he was to discover, and that discovery was the first step toward his undoing. After the greeting ("she greeted me with great simplicity and courtesy and bade me again take my seat"), she remarked on how dark the room was and how the autumn always came to take one unawares. Then she touched a bell-pull and a negro boy entered. "She commanded him to bring light and to mend the fire, which was sunk to ash, or near so. He came back presently with a seven-branched candlestick which he put upon the table back of the couch on which I sat. He struck a lucifer but she said 'Let me light the candles.' I remember it as if yesterday. I was sitting on the couch. I had turned my head idly to watch her light the candles. The little table was between us. She leaned over the candles and applied the lucifer to the wicks, one after another. She was leaning over, and I saw how the corset lifted her breasts together, but because she was leaning the eyelids shaded her eyes from my sight. Then she raised her head a little and looked straight at me over the new candle flames, and I saw all at once that her eyes were not black. They were blue, but a blue so deep that I can only compare it to the color of the night sky in autumn when the weather is clear and there is no moon and the stars have just well come out. And I had not known how large they were. I remember saying that to myself with perfect clearness, 'I had not known how large they were,' several times, slowly, like a man marvelling. Then I knew that I was blushing and I felt my tongue dry like ashes in my mouth and I was in the manly state.

"I can see perfectly clearly the expression on her face even now, but I cannot interpret it. Sometimes I have thought of it as having a smiling hidden in it, but I cannot be sure. (I am only sure of this: that man is never safe and damnation is ever at hand, O God and my Redeemer!) I sat there, one hand clenched upon my knee and the other holding an empty glass, and I felt that I could not breathe. Then she said to her husband, who stood in the room behind me, 'Duncan, do you see that Mr. Mastern is in need of refreshment?' "

The year passed. Cass, who was a good deal younger than Duncan Trice, and as a matter of fact several years younger than Annabelle Trice, became a close companion of Duncan Trice and learned much from him, for Duncan Trice was rich, fashionable, clever, and high-spirited ("much given to laughter and full-blooded"). Duncan Trice led Cass to the bottle, the gaming table and the racecourse, but not to "the illicit sweetness of the flesh." Duncan Trice was passionately and single-mindedly devoted to his wife. ("When she came into a room, his eyes would fix upon her without shame, and I have seen her avert her face and blush for the boldness of his glance when company was present. But I think that it was done by him unawares, his partiality for her was so great.") No, the other young men, members of the Trice circle, led Cass first to the "illicit sweetness." But despite the new interests and gratifications, Cass could work at his books. There was even time for that, for he had great strength and endurance.

So the year passed. He had been much in the Trice house, but no word beyond the "words of merriment and civility" had passed between him and Annabelle Trice. In June, there was a dancing party at the house of some friend of Duncan Trice. Duncan Trice, his wife, and Cass happened to stroll at some moment into the garden and to sit in a little arbor, which was covered with a jasmine vine. Duncan Trice returned to the house to get punch for the three of them, leaving Annabelle and Cass seated side by side in the arbor. Cass commented on the sweetness of the scent of jasmine. All at once, she burst out ("her voice low-pitched and with its huskiness, but in a vehemence which astonished me"), "Yes, yes, it is too sweet. It is suffocating. I shall suffocate." And she laid her right hand, with the fingers spread, across the bare swell of her bosom above the pressure of the corset.

"Thinking her taken by some sudden illness," Cass recorded in the journal, "I asked if she were faint. She said no, in a very low, husky voice. Nevertheless I rose, with the expressed intention of get-

ting a glass of water for her. Suddenly she said, quite harshly and to my amazement, because of her excellent courtesy, 'Sit down, sit down, I don't want water!' So somewhat distressed in mind that unwittingly I might have offended, I sat down. I looked across the garden where in the light of the moon several couples promenaded down the paths between the low hedges. I could hear the sound of her breathing beside me. It was disturbed and irregular. All at once she said, 'How old are you, Mr. Mastern?' I said twenty-two. Then she said, 'I am twenty-nine.' I stammered something, in my surprise. She laughed as though at my confusion, and said 'Yes, I am seven years older than you, Mr. Mastern. Does that surprise you, Mr. Mastern?' I replied in the affirmative. Then she said, 'Seven years is a long time. Seven years ago you were a child, Mr. Mastern.' Then she laughed, with a sudden sharpness, but quickly stopped herself to add, 'But I wasn't a child. Not seven years ago, Mr. Mastern.' I did not answer her, for there was no thought clear in my head. I sat there in confusion, but in the middle of my confusion I was trying to see what she would have looked like as a child. I could call up no image. Then her husband returned from the house."

A few days later Cass went back to Mississippi to devote some months to his plantation, and, under the guidance of Gilbert, to go once to Jackson, the capital, and once to Vicksburg. It was a busy summer. Now Cass could see clearly what Gilbert intended: to make him rich and to put him into politics. It was a flattering and glittering prospect, and one not beyond reasonable expectation for a young man whose brother was Gilbert Mastern ("My brother is a man of great taciturnity and strong mind, and when he speaks, though he practices no graces and ingratiations, all men, especially those of the sober sort who have responsibility and power, weigh his words with respect.") So the summer passed, under the strong hand and cold eye of Gilbert. But toward the end of the season, when already Cass was beginning to give thought to his return to Transylvania, an envelope came addressed to him from Lexington, in an unfamiliar script. When Cass unfolded the single sheet of paper a small pressed blossom, or what he discovered to be such, slipped out. For a moment he could not think what it was, or why it was in his hand. Then he put it to his nostrils. The odor, now faint and dusty, was the odor of jasmine.

The sheet of paper had been folded twice, to make four equal sections. In one section, in a clean, strong, not large script, he read: "Oh, Cass!" That was all.

It was enough.

One drizzly autumn afternoon, just after his return to Lexington, Cass called at the Trice house to pay his respects. Duncan Trice was not there, having sent word that he had been urgently detained in the town and would be home for a late dinner. Of that afternoon, Cass wrote: "I found myself in the room alone with her. There were shadows, as there had been that afternoon, almost a year before, when I first saw her in that room, and when I had thought that her eyes were black. She greeted me civilly, and I replied and stepped back after having shaken her hand. Then I realized that she was looking at me fixedly, as I at her. Suddenly, her lips parted slightly and gave a short exhalation, like a sigh or suppressed moan. As of one accord, we moved toward each other and embraced. No words were passed between us as we stood there. We stood there for a long time, or so it seemed. I held her body close to me in a strong embrace, but we did not exchange a kiss, which upon recollection has since seemed strange. But was it strange? Was it strange that some remnant of shame should forbid us to look each other in the face? I felt and heard my heart racing within my bosom, with a loose feeling as though it were unmoored and were leaping at random in a great cavity within me, but at the same time I scarcely accepted the fact of my situation. I was somehow possessed by incredulity, even as to my identity, as I stood there and my nostrils were filled with the fragrance of her hair. It was not to be believed that I was Cass Mastern, who stood thus in the house of a friend and benefactor. There was no remorse or horror at the turpitude of the act, but only the incredulity which I have referred to. (One feels incredulity at observing the breaking of a habit, but horror at the violation of a principle. Therefore what virtue and honor I had known in the past had been an accident of habit and not the fruit of will. Or can virtue be the fruit of human will? The thought is pride.)

"As I have said, we stood there for a long time in a strong embrace, but with her face lowered against my chest, and my own eyes staring across the room and out a window into the deepening obscurity of the evening. When she finally raised her face, I saw that she had been silently weeping. Why was she weeping? I have asked myself that question. Was it because even on the verge of committing an irremediable wrong she could weep at the consequence of an act which she felt powerless to avoid? Was it because the man who held her was much younger than she and his embrace gave her the reproach of youth and seven years? Was it because he had come seven

years too late and could not come in innocence? It does not matter what the cause. If it was the first, then the tears can only prove that sentiment is no substitute for obligation, if the second, then they only prove that pity of the self is no substitute for wisdom. But she shed the tears and finally lifted her face to mine with those tears bright in her large eyes, and even now, though those tears were my ruin, I cannot wish them unshed, for they testify to the warmth of her heart and prove that whatever her sin (and mine) she did not step to it with a gay foot and with the eyes hard with lust and fleshly cupidity.

"The tears were my ruin, for when she lifted her face to me some streak of tenderness was mixed into my feelings, and my heart seemed to flood itself into my bosom to fill that great cavity wherein it had been leaping. She said, 'Cass'—the first time she had ever addressed me by my Christian name. 'Yes,' I replied. 'Kiss me,' she said very simply, 'you can do it now.' So I kissed her. And thereupon in the blindness of our mortal blood and in the appetite of our hearts we performed the act. There in that very room with the servants walking with soft feet somewhere in the house and with the door to the room open and with her husband expected, and not yet in the room the darkness of evening. But we were secure in our very recklessness, as though the lustful heart could give forth a cloud of darkness in which we were shrouded, even as Venus once shrouded Aeneas in a cloud so that he passed unspied among men to approach the city of Dido. In such cases as ours the very recklessness gives security as the strength of the desire seems to give the sanction of justice and righteousness.

"Though she had wept and had seemed to perform the act in a sadness and desperation, immediately afterward she spoke cheerfully to me. She stood in the middle of the room pressing her hair into place, and I stumbly ventured some remark about our future, a remark very vague for my being was still confused, but she responded, 'Oh, let us not think about it now,' as though I had broached a subject of no consequence. She promptly summoned a servant and asked for lights. They were brought and thereupon I inspected her face to find it fresh and unmarked. When her husband came, she greeted him familiarly and affectionately, and as I witnessed it my own heart was wrenched, but not, I must confess, with compunction. Rather with a violent jealousy. When he spoke to me, so great was my disturbance that I was sure that my face could but betray it."

So began the second phase of the story of Cass Mastern. All that year, as before, he was often in the house of Duncan Trice, and

as before he was often with him in field sports, gambling, drinking, and race-going. He learned, he says, to "wear his brow unwrinkled," to accept the condition of things. As for Annabelle Trice, he says that sometimes looking back, he could scarcely persuade himself that "she had shed tears". She was, he says, "of a warm nature, reckless and passionate of disposition, hating all mention of the future (she would never let me mention times to come), agile, resourceful, and cheerful in devising to gratify our appetites, but with a womanly tenderness such as any man might prize at a sanctified hearthside." She must indeed have been agile and resourceful, for to carry on such a liaison undetected in that age and place must have been a problem. There was a kind of summer house at the foot of the Trice garden, which one could enter unobserved from an alley. Some of their meetings occurred there. A half-sister of Annabelle Trice, who lived in Lexington, apparently assisted the lovers or winked at their relationship, but, it seems, only after some pressure by Annabelle, for Cass hints at "a stormy scene." So some of the meetings were there. But now and then Duncan Trice had to be out of town on business, and on those occasions Cass would be admitted, late at night, to the house, even during a period when Annabelle's mother and father were staying there; so he actually lay in the very bed belonging to Duncan Trice.

There were, however, other meetings, unplanned and unpredictable moments snatched when they found themselves left alone together. "Scarce a corner, cranny, or protected nook or angle of my friend's trusting house did we not at one time or another defile, and that even in the full and shameless light of day," Cass wrote in the journal, and when Jack Burden, the student of history, went to Lexington and went to see the old Trice home he remembered the sentence. The town had grown up around the house, and the gardens, except for a patch of lawn, were gone. But the house was well maintained (some people named Miller lived there and by and large respected the place) and Jack Burden was permitted to inspect the premises. He wandered about the room where the first meeting had taken place and she had raised her eyes to Cass Mastern above the newly lighted candles and where, a year later, she had uttered the sigh, or suppressed moan, and stepped to his arms; and out into the hall, which was finely proportioned and with a graceful stair; and into a small, shadowy library; and to a kind of back hall, which was a well "protected nook or angle" and had, as a matter of fact, furniture adequate to the occasion. Jack Burden stood in the main hall,

which was cool and dim, with dully glittering floors, and in the silence of the house, recalled that period, some seventy years before, of the covert glances, the guarded whispers, the abrupt rustling of silk in the silence (the costume of the period certainly had not been designed to encourage casual vice), the sharp breath, the reckless sighs. Well, all of that had been a hell of a long time before, and Annabelle Trice and Cass Mastern were long since deader than mackerel, and Mrs. Miller, who came down to give Jack Burden a cup of tea (she was flattered by the "historical" interest in her house, though she didn't guess the exact nature of the case), certainly was not "agile" and didn't look "resourceful" and probably had used up all her energy in the Ladies Altar Guild of Saint Luke's Episcopal Church and in the D.A.R.

The period of the intrigue, the second phase of the story of Cass Mastern, lasted all of one academic year, part of the summer (for Cass was compelled to go back to Mississippi for his plantation affairs and to attend the wedding of his sister Lavinia, who married a well-connected young man named Willis Burden), and well through the next winter, when Cass was back in Lexington. Then, on March 19, 1854, Duncan died, in his library (which was a "protected nook or angle" of his house), with a lead slug nearly the size of a man's thumb in his chest. It was quite obviously an accident.

The widow sat in church, upright and immobile. When she once raised her veil to touch at her eyes with a handkerchief, Cass Mastern saw that the cheek was "pale as marble but for a single flushed spot, like the flush of fever." But even when the veil was lowered he detected the fixed, bright eyes glittering "within that artificial shadow."

Cass Mastern, with five other young men of Lexington, cronies and boon companions of the dead man, carried the coffin. "The coffin which I carried seemed to have no weight, although my friend had been of large frame and had inclined to stoutness. As we proceeded with it, I marvelled at the fact of its lightness, and once the fancy flitted into my mind that he was not in the coffin at all, that it was empty, and that all the affair was a masquerade or mock-show carried to ludicrous and blasphemous length, for no purpose, as in a dream. Or to deceive me, the fancy came. I was the object of the deception, and all the other people were in league and conspiracy against me. But when that thought came, I suddenly felt a sense of great cunning and a wild exhilaration. I had been too sharp to be caught so. I had penetrated the deception. I had the impulse to hurl

the coffin to the ground and see its emptiness burst open and to laugh in triumph. But I did not, and I saw the coffin sink beneath the level of the earth on which we stood and receive the first clods.

"As soon as the sound of the first clods striking the coffin came to me, I felt a great relief, and then a most overmastering desire. I looked toward her. She was kneeling at the foot of the grave, with what thoughts I could not know. Her head was inclined slightly and the veil was over her face. The bright sun poured over her black-clad figure. I could not take my eyes from the sight. The posture seemed to accentuate the charms of her person and to suggest to my inflamed senses the suppleness of her members. Even the funereal tint of her costume seemed to add to the provocation. The sunshine was hot upon my neck and could be felt through the stuff of my coat upon my shoulders. It was preternaturally bright so that I was blinded by it and my eyes were blinded and my senses swam. But all the while I could hear, as from a great distance, the scraping of the spades upon the piled earth and the muffled sound of earth falling into the excavation."

That evening Cass went to the summer house in the garden. It was not by appointment, simply on impulse. He waited there a long time, but she finally appeared, dressed in black "which was scarce darker than the night." He did not speak, or make any sign as she approached, "gliding like a shadow among shadows," but remained standing where he had been, in the deepest obscurity of the summer house. Even when she entered, he did not betray his presence. "I can not be certain that any premeditation was in my silence. It was prompted by an overpowering impulse which gripped me and sealed my throat and froze my limbs. Before that moment, and afterwards, I knew that it is dishonorable to spy upon another, but at the moment no such considerations presented themselves. I had to keep my eyes fixed upon her as she stood there thinking herself alone in the darkness of the structure. I had the fancy that since she thought herself alone I might penetrate into her being, that I might learn what change, what effect, had been wrought by the death of her husband. The passion which had seized me to the very extent of paroxysm that afternoon at the very brink of my friend's grave was gone. I was perfectly cold now. But I had to know, to try to know. It was as though I might know myself by knowing her. (It is the human defect—to try to know oneself by the self of another. One can only know oneself in God and in His great eye.)

"She entered the summer house and sank upon one of the

benches, not more than a few feet from my own location. For a long time I stood there, peering at her. She sat perfectly upright and rigid. At last I whispered her name, as low as might be. If she heard it, she gave no sign. So I repeated her name, in the same fashion, and again. Upon the third utterance, she whispered, 'yes,' but she did not change her posture or turn her head. Then I spoke more loudly, again uttering her name, and instantly, with a motion of wild alarm she rose, with a strangled cry, and her hands lifted toward her face. She reeled, and it seemed that she would collapse to the floor, but she gained control of herself and stood there staring at me. Stammeringly, I made my apology, saying that I had not wanted to startle her, that I had understood her to answer yes to my whisper before I spoke, and I asked her, 'Did you not answer to my whisper?'

"She replied that she had.

" 'Then why were you distressed when I spoke again?' I asked her.

" 'Because, I did not know that you were here,' she said.

" 'But,' I said, 'you say that you had just heard my whisper and had answered to it, and now you say that you did not know I was here.'

" 'I did not know that you were here,' she repeated, in a low voice, and the import of what she was saying dawned upon me.

" 'Listen,' I said, 'when you heard the whisper—did you recognize it was my voice?'

"She stared at me, not answering.

" 'Answer me,' I demanded, for I had to know.

"She continued to stare, and finally replied hesitantly, 'I do not know.'

" 'You thought it was—' I began, but before I could utter the words she had flung herself upon me, clasping me in desperation like a person frantic with drowning, and ejaculated: 'No, no, it does not matter what I thought, you are here, you are here!' And she drew my face down and pressed her lips against mine to stop my words. Her lips were cold, but they hung upon mine.

"I too was perfectly cold, as of a mortal chill. And the coldness was the final horror of the act which we performed, as though two dolls should parody the shame and filth of man to make it doubly shameful.

"After, she said to me, 'Had I not found you here tonight, it could never have been between us again.'

" 'Why?' I demanded.

" 'It was a sign,' she said.

" 'A sign?' I asked.

" 'A sign that we cannot escape, that we—' and she interrupted herself, to resume, whispering fiercely in the dark, 'I do not want to escape—it is a sign—whatever I have done is done.' She grew quiet for a moment, then she said, 'Give me your hand.'

"I gave her my right hand. She grasped it, dropped it, and said, 'The other, the other hand.'

"I held it out, across my own body, for I was sitting on her left. She seized it with her own left hand, bringing her hand upward from below to press my hand flat against her bosom. Then, fumblingly, she slipped a ring upon my finger, the finger next to the smallest.

" 'What is that?' I asked.

" 'A ring,' she answered, paused, and added, 'It is his ring.'

"Then I recalled that he, my friend, had always worn a wedding ring, and I felt the metal cold upon my flesh. 'Did you take it off of his finger?' I asked, and the thought shook me.

" 'No,' she said.

" 'No?' I questioned.

" 'No,' she said, 'he took it off. It was the only time he ever took it off.'

"I sat beside her, waiting for what, I did not know, while she held my hand pressed against her bosom. I could feel it rise and fall. I could say nothing.

"Then she said, 'Do you want to know how—how he took it off?'

" 'Yes,' I said in the dark, and waiting for her to speak, I moved my tongue out upon my dry lips.

" 'Listen,' she commanded me in an imperious whisper, 'that evening after—after it happened—after the house was quiet again, I sat in my room, in the little chair by the dressing table, where I always sit for Phebe to let down my hair. I had sat there out of habit, I suppose, for I was numb all over. I watched Phebe preparing the bed for the night.' (Phebe was her waiting maid, a comely yellow wench somewhat given to the fits and sulls.) 'I saw Phebe remove the bolster and then look down at a spot where the bolster had lain, on my side of the bed. She picked something up and came toward me. She stared at me—and her eyes, they are yellow, you look into them and you can't see what is in them—she stared at me—a long time—and then she held out her hand, clenched shut and she watched me—and then—slow, so slow—she opened up the fingers—and there lay the ring on the palm of her hand—and I knew it was his ring but all I thought was,

it is gold and it is lying in a gold hand. For Phebe's hand was gold—I had never noticed how her hand is the color of pure gold. Then I looked up and she was still staring at me, and her eyes were gold, too, and bright and hard like gold. And I knew that she knew.'

"'Knew?' I echoed, like a question, for I knew, too, now. My friend had learned the truth—from the coldness of his wife, from the gossip of servants—and had drawn the gold ring from his finger and carried it to the bed where he had lain with her and had put it beneath her pillow and had gone down and shot himself but under such circumstances that no one save his wife would ever guess it to be more than an accident. But he had made one fault of calculation. The yellow wench had found the ring.

"'She knows,' she whispered, pressing my hand hard against her bosom, which heaved and palpitated with a new wildness. 'She knows—and she looks at me—she will always look at me.' Then suddenly her voice dropped, and a wailing intonation came into it: 'She will tell. All of them will know. All of them in the house will look at me and know—when they hand me the dish—when they come into the room—and their feet don't make any noise!' She rose abruptly, dropping my hand. I remained seated, and she stood there beside me, her back toward me, the whiteness of her face and hands no longer visible, and to my sight the blackness of her costume faded into the shadow, even in such proximity. Suddenly, in a voice which I did not recognize for its hardness, she said in the darkness above me, 'I will not abide it, I will not abide it!' Then she turned, and with a swooping motion leaned to kiss me upon the mouth. Then she was gone from my side and I heard her feet running up the gravel of the path. I sat there in the darkness for a time longer, turning the ring upon my finger."

After that meeting in the summer house, Cass did not see Annabelle Trice for some days. He learned that she had gone to Louisville, where, he recalled, she had close friends. She had, as was natural, taken Phebe with her. Then he heard that she had returned, and that night, late, went to the summer house in the garden. She was there, sitting in the dark. She greeted him. She seemed, he wrote later, peculiarly cut off, remote, and vague in manner, like a somnambulist or a person drugged. He asked about her trip to Louisville, and she replied briefly that she had been down the river to Paducah. He remarked that he had not known that she had friends in Paducah, and she said that she had none there. Then, all at once, she turned on him, the vagueness changing to violence, and burst out, "You are prying—

you are prying into my affairs—and I will not tolerate it.” Cass stammered out some excuse before she cut in to say, “But if you must know, I’ll tell you. I took her there.”

For a moment Cass was genuinely confused, “Her?” he questioned. “Phebe,” she replied, “I took her to Paducah, and she’s gone.”

“Gone—gone where?”

“Down the river,” she answered, repeated, “down the river,” and laughed abruptly, and added, “and she won’t look at me any more like that.”

“You sold her?”

“Yes, I sold her. In Paducah, to a man who was making up a coffle of negroes for New Orleans. And nobody knows me in Paducah, nobody knew I was there, nobody knows I sold her, for I shall say she ran away into Illinois. But I sold her. For thirteen hundred dollars.”

“You got a good price,” Cass said, “even for a yellow girl as sprightly as Phebe.” And, as he reports in the journal, he laughed with some “bitterness and rudeness,” though he does not say why.

“Yes,” she replied, “I got a good price. I made him pay every penny she was worth. And then do you know what I did with the money, do you?”

“No.”

“When I came off the boat at Louisville, there was an old man, a nigger, sitting on the landing stage, and he was blind and picking on a guitar and singing ‘Old Dan Tucker.’ I took the money out of my bag and walked to him and laid it in his old hat.”

“If you were going to give the money away—if you felt the money was defiled—why didn’t you free her?” Cass asked.

“She’d stay right here, she wouldn’t go away, she would stay right here and look at me. Oh, no, she wouldn’t go away, for she’s the wife of a man the Motley’s have, their coachman. Oh, she’d stay right here and look at me and tell, tell what she knows, and I’ll not abide it!”

Then Cass said: “If you had spoken to me I would have bought the man from Mr. Motley and set him free, too.”

“He wouldn’t have sold,” she said, “the Motleys won’t sell a servant.”

“Even to be freed?” Cass continued, and she cut in, “I tell you I won’t have you interfering with my affairs, do you understand that?” And she rose from his side and stood in the middle of the summer house, and, he reports, he saw the glimmer of her face in the shadow and heard her agitated breathing. “I thought you were fond of her,” Cass said.

"I was," she said, "until—until she looked at me like that."

"You know why you got that price for her?" Cass asked, and without waiting for an answer, went on: "Because she's yellow and comely and well-made. Oh, the drovers wouldn't take her down chained in a coffin. They wouldn't wear her down. They'll take her down the river soft. And you know why?"

"Yes, I know why," she said, "and what is it to you? Are you so charmed by her?"

"That is unfair," Cass said.

"Oh, I see, Mr. Mastern," she said, "oh, I see, you are concerned for the honor of a black coachman. It is very delicate sentiment, Mr. Mastern. Why—" and she came to stand above him as he still sat on the bench, "why did you not show some such delicate concern for the honor of your friend? Who is now dead."

According to the journal, there was, at this moment, "a tempest of feeling" in his breast. He wrote: "Thus I heard put into words for the first time the accusation which has ever, in all climes, been that most calculated to make wince a man of proper nurture or natural rectitude. What the hardened man can bear to hear from the still small voice within, may yet be when spoken by any external tongue an accusation dire enough to drain his very cheeks of blood. But it was not only that accusation in itself, for in very truth I had supped full of that horror and made it my long familiar. It was not merely the betrayal of my friend. It was not merely the death of my friend, at whose breast I had leveled the weapon. I could have managed somehow to live with those facts. But I suddenly felt that the world outside of me was shifting and the substance of things, and that the process had only begun of a general disintegration of which I was the center. At that moment of perturbation, when the cold sweat broke on my brow, I did not frame any sentence distinctly to my mind. But I have looked back and wrestled to know the truth. It was not the fact that a slave woman was being sold away from the house where she had had protection and kindness and away from the arms of her husband into debauchery. I knew that such things had happened in fact, and I was no child, for after my arrival in Lexington and my acquaintance with the looser sort of companions, the sportsmen and the followers of the races, I had myself enjoyed such diversions. It was not only the fact that the woman for whom I had sacrificed my friend's life and my honor could, in her new suffering, turn on me with a cold rage and the language of insult so that I did not recognize her. It was, instead, the fact that all of these things—the death of my friend, the betrayal

of Phebe, the suffering and rage and great change of the woman I had loved—all had come from my single act of sin and perfidy, as the boughs from the bole and the leaves from the bough. Or to figure the matter differently, it was as though the vibration set up in the whole fabric of the world by my act had spread infinitely and with ever increasing power and no man could know the end. I did not put it into words in such fashion, but I stood there shaken by a tempest of feeling."

When Cass had somewhat controlled his agitation, he said, "To whom did you sell the girl?"

"What's it to you?" she answered.

"To whom did you sell the girl?" he repeated.

"I'll not tell you," she said.

"I will find out," he said. "I will go to Paducah and find out."

She grasped him by the arm, driving her fingers deep into the flesh, "like talons," and demanded, "Why—why are you going?"

"To find her," he said. "To find her and buy her and set her free." He had not premeditated this. He heard the words, he wrote in the journal, and knew that that was his intention. "To find her and buy her and set her free," he said, and felt the grasp on his arm released and then in the dark suddenly felt the rake of her nails down his cheek, and heard her voice in a kind of "wild sibillance" saying, "If you do—if you do—oh, I'll not abide it—I will not!"

She flung herself from his side and to the bench. He heard her gasp and sob, "a hard dry sob like a man's." He did not move. Then he heard her voice, "If you do—if you do—she looked at me that way, and I'll not abide it—if you do—" Then after a pause, very quietly: "If you do, I shall never see you again."

He made no reply. He stood there for some minutes, he did not know how long, then he left the summer house, where she still sat, and walked down the alley.

The next morning he left for Paducah. He learned the name of the trader, but he also learned that the trader had sold Phebe (a yellow wench who answered to Phebe's description) to a "private party" who happened to be in Paducah at the time but who had gone on down river. His name was unknown in Paducah. The trader had presumably sold Phebe so that he would be free to accompany his coffin when it had been made up. He had now headed, it was said, into south Kentucky, with a few bucks and wenches, to pick up more. As Cass had predicted, he had not wanted to wear Phebe down by taking her in the coffin. So getting a good figure of profit in Paducah, he had

sold her there. Cass went south as far as Bowling Green, but lost track of his man there. So, rather hopelessly, he wrote a letter to the trader, in care of the market at New Orleans, asking for the name of the purchaser and any information about him. Then he swung back north to Lexington.

At Lexington he went down to West Short Street, to the Lewis C. Robards barracoon, which Mr. Robards had converted from the old Lexington Theatre a few years earlier. He had a notion that Mr. Robards, the leading trader of the section, might be able, through his down-river connections, to locate Phebe, if enough of a commission was in sight. At the barracoon there was no one in the office except a boy, who said that Mr. Robards was down river but that Mr. Simms was "holding things down" and was over at the "house" at an "inspection." So Cass went next door to the house. (When Jack Burden was in Lexington investigating the life of Cass Mastern, he saw the "house" still standing, a two-storey brick building of the traditional residential type, roof running lengthwise, door in center of front, window on each side, chimney at each end, lean-to in back. Robards had kept his "choice stock" there and not in the coops, to wait for "inspection.")

Cass found the main door unlocked at the house, entered the hall, saw no one, but heard laughter from above. He mounted the stairs and discovered, at the end of the hall, a small group of men gathered at an open door. He recognized a couple of them, young hangers-on he had seen about town and at the track. He approached and asked if Mr. Simms was about. "Inside," one of the men said, "showing." Over the heads, Cass could see into the room. First he saw a short, strongly made man, a varnished looking man, with black hair, black neck-cloth, large bright black eyes, and black coat, with a crop in his hand. Cass knew immediately that he was a French "speculator," who was buying "fancies" for Louisiana. The Frenchman was staring at something beyond Cass's range of vision. Cass moved farther and could see within.

There he saw the man whom he took to be Mr. Simms, a nondescript fellow in a plug hat, and beyond him the figure of a woman. She was a very young woman, some twenty years old perhaps, rather slender, with skin slightly darker than ivory, probably an octoroon, and hair crisp rather than kinky, and deep dark liquid eyes, slightly bloodshot, which stared at a spot above and beyond the Frenchman. She did not wear the ordinary plaid osnaburg and kerchief of the female slave up for sale, but a white, loosely cut dress, with elbow-length sleeves, and skirts to the floor and no kerchief, only a band to

her hair. Beyond her, in the neatly furnished room ("quite genteel," the journal called it, while noting the barred windows), Cass saw a rocking chair and little table, and on the table a sewing basket with a piece of fancy needle-work lying there with the needle stuck in it, "as though some respectable young lady or householder had dropped it casually aside upon rising to greet a guest." Cass recorded that somehow he found himself staring at the needlework.

"Yeah," Mr. Simms was saying, "yeah." And grasped the girl by the shoulder to swing her slowly around for a complete view. Then he seized one of her wrists and lifted the arm to shoulder level and worked it back and forth a couple of times to show the supple articulation, saying, "yeah." That done, he drew the arm forward, holding it toward the Frenchman, the hand hanging limply from the wrist which he held. (The hand was, according to the journal, "well moulded, and the fingers tapered.") "Yeah," Mr. Simms said, "look at that-air hand. Ain't no lady got a littler, teensier hand. And round and soft, yeah?"

"Ain't she got nuthen else round and soft?" one of the men at the door called, and the others laughed.

"Yeah," Mr. Simms said, and leaned to take the hem of her dress, which with a delicate flirting motion he lifted higher than her waist, while he reached out with his other hand to wad the cloth and draw it into a kind of "awkward girdle" about her waist. Still holding the wad of cloth he walked around her, forcing her to turn (she turned "without resistance and as though in a trance") with his motion until her small buttocks were toward the door. "Round and soft, boys," Mr. Simms said, and gave her a good whack on the near buttock to make the flesh tremble. "Ever git yore hand on anything rounder ner softer, boys?" he demanded. "Hit's a cushion, I declare. And shake like sweet jelly."

"God-a-mighty and got on stockings," one of the men said.

While the other men laughed, the Frenchman stepped to the side of the girl, reached out to lay the tip of his riding crop at the little depression just above the beginning of the swell of the buttocks. He held the tip delicately there for a moment, then flattened the crop across the back and moved it down slowly, evenly across each buttock, to trace the fullness of the curve. "Turn her," he said in his foreign voice.

Mr. Simms obediently carried the wad around, and the body followed in the half revolution. One of the men at the door whistled. The Frenchman laid his crop across the woman's belly as though he were a "carpenter measuring something or as to demonstrate its flat-

ness," and moved it down as before, tracing the structure, until he came to rest across the thighs, below the triangle. Then he let his hand fall to his side, with the crop. "Open your mouth," he said to the girl.

She did so, and he peered earnestly at her teeth. Then he leaned and whiffed her breath. "It is a good breath," he admitted, as though grudgingly.

"Yeah," Mr. Simms said, "yeah, you ain't a-finden no better breath."

"Have you any others?" the Frenchman demanded. "On hand?"

"We got 'em," Mr. Simms said.

"Let me see," the Frenchman said, and moved toward the door with, apparently, the "insolent expectation" that the group there would dissolve before him. He went out into the hall, Mr. Simms following. While Mr. Simms locked the door, Cass said to him, "I wish to speak to you, if you are Mr. Simms."

"Huh?" Mr. Simms said ("grunted" according to the journal), but looking at Cass became suddenly civil for he could know from dress and bearing that Cass was not one of the casual hangers-on. So Mr. Simms admitted the Frenchman to the next room to inspect its occupant, and returned to Cass. Cass remarked in the journal that trouble might have been avoided if he had been more careful to speak in private, but he wrote that at the time the matter was so much upon his mind that the men who stood about were as shadows to him.

He explained his wish to Mr. Simms, described Phebe as well as possible, gave the name of the trader in Paducah, and offered a liberal commission. Mr. Simms seemed dubious, promised to do what he could, and then said, "But nine outa ten you won't git her, Mister. And we got sumthen here better. You done seen Delphy, and she's nigh white as airy woman, and a sight more juicy, and that gal you talk about is nuthen but yaller. Now Delphy—"

"But the young gemmun got a hankeren fer yaller," one of the hangers-on said, and laughed, and the others laughed too.

Cass struck him across the mouth. "I struck him with the side of my fist," Cass wrote, "to bring blood. I struck him without thought, and I recollect the surprise which visited me when I saw the blood on his chin and saw him draw a bowie from his shirt-front. I attempted to avoid his first blow, but received it upon my left shoulder. Before he could withdraw, I had grasped his wrist in my right hand, forced it down so that I could also use my left hand, which still had some strength left at that moment, and with a turning motion of my body I broke his arm across my right hip, and then knocked him to the floor. I recovered the bowie from the floor, and

with it faced the man who seemed to be the friend of the man who was now prostrate. He had a knife in his hand, but he seemed disinclined to pursue the discussion."

Cass declined the assistance of Mr. Simms, pressed a handkerchief over his wound, walked out of the building and toward his lodgings, and collapsed on West Short Street. He was carried home. The next day he was better. He learned that Mrs. Trice had left the city, presumably for Washington. A couple of days later his wound infected, and for some time he lay in delirium between life and death. His recovery was slow, presumably retarded by what he termed in the journal his "will toward darkness." But his constitution was stronger than his will, and he recovered, to know himself as the "chief of sinners and a plague-spot on the body of the human world." He would have committed suicide except for the fear of damnation for that act, for though "hopeless of Grace I yet clung to the hope of Grace." But sometimes the very fact of damnation because of suicide seemed to be the very reason for suicide: he had brought his friend to suicide and the friend, by that act, was eternally damned; therefore he, Cass Mastern, should, in justice, insure his own damnation by the same act. "But the Lord preserved me from self-slaughter for ends which are His and beyond my knowledge."

Mrs. Trice did not come back to Lexington.

He returned to Mississippi. For two years he operated his plantation, read the Bible, prayed, and, strangely enough, prospered greatly, almost as though against his will. In the end he repaid Gilbert his debt, and set free his slaves. He had some notion of operating the plantation with the same force on a wage basis. "You fool," Gilbert said to him, "be a private fool if you must, but in God's name don't be a public one. Do you think you can work them and them free? One day work, one day loaf. Do you think you can have a passell of free niggers next door to a plantation with slaves? If you did have to set them free, you don't have to spend the rest of your natural life nursing them. Get them out of this country, and take up law or medicine. Or preach the Gospel and at least make a living out of all this praying." Cass tried for more than a year to operate the plantation with his free negroes, but was compelled to confess that the project was a failure. "Get them out of the country," Gilbert said to him. "And why don't you go with them. Why don't you go North?"

"I belong here," Cass replied.

"Well, why don't you preach Abolition right here?" Gilbert demanded. "Do something, do anything, but stop making a fool of yourself trying to raise cotton with free niggers."

"Perhaps I shall preach Abolition," Cass said, "someday. Even here. But not now. I am not worthy to instruct others. Not now. But meanwhile there is my example. If it is good, it is not lost. Nothing is ever lost."

"Except your mind," Gilbert said, and flung heavily from the room.

There was a sense of trouble in the air. Only Gilbert's great wealth and prestige and scarcely concealed humorous contempt for Cass saved Cass from ostracism, or worse. ("His contempt for me is a shield," Cass wrote. "He treats me like a wayward and silly child who may learn better and who does not have to be taken seriously. Therefore my neighbors do not take me seriously.") But trouble did come. One of Cass's negroes had a broad-wife on a plantation near by. After she had had some minor trouble with the overseer, the husband stole her from the plantation and ran away. Toward the Tennessee border the pair were taken. The man, resisting officers, was shot; the woman was brought back. "See," Gilbert said, "all you have managed to do is get one nigger killed and one nigger whipped. I offer my congratulations." So Cass put his free negroes on a boat bound up river, and never heard of them again.

"I saw the boat head out into the channel, and watched the wheels churn against the strong current, and my spirit was troubled. I knew that the negroes were passing from one misery to another, and that the hopes they now carried would be blighted. They had kissed my hands and wept for joy, but I could take no part in their rejoicing. I had not flattered myself that I had done anything for them. What I had done I had done for myself, to relieve my spirit of a burden, the burden of their misery and their eyes upon me. The wife of my dead friend had found the eyes of the girl Phebe upon her and had gone wild and had ceased to be herself and had sold the girl into misery. I had found their eyes upon me and had freed them into misery, lest I should do worse. For many cannot bear their eyes upon them, and enter into evil and cruel ways in their desperation. There was in Lexington a decade and more before my stay in that city, a wealthy lawyer named Fielding L. Turner, who had married a lady of position from Boston. This lady, Caroline Turner, who had never had blacks around her and who had been nurtured in sentiments opposed to the institution of human servitude, quickly became notorious for her abominable cruelties performed in her fits of passion. All persons of the community reprehended her floggings, which she performed with her own hands, uttering meanwhile little cries in her throat, according to report. Once while she was engaged in flogging a servant

in an apartment on the second floor of her palatial home, a small negro boy entered the room and began to whimper. She seized him and bodily hurled him through the window of the apartment so that he fell upon a stone below and broke his back to become a cripple for his days. To protect her from the process of law and the wrath of the community, Judge Turner committed her to a lunatic asylum. But later the physicians said her to be of sound mind and released her. Her husband in his will left her no slaves, for to do so would, the will said, be to doom them to misery in life and a speedy death. But she procured slaves, among them a yellow coachman named Richard, mild of manner, sensible, and of plausible disposition. One day she had him chained and proceeded to flog him. But he tore himself from the chains that held him to the wall and seized the woman by the throat and strangled her. Later he was captured and hanged for murder, though many wished that his escape had been contrived. This story was told me in Lexington. One lady said to me: 'Mrs. Turner did not understand negroes.' And another: 'Mrs. Turner did it because she was from Boston where the Abolitionists are.' But I did not understand. Then, much later, I began to understand. I understood that Mrs. Turner flogged her negroes for the same reason that the wife of my friend sold Phebe down the river: she could not bear their eyes upon her. I understand, for I can no longer bear their eyes upon me. Perhaps only a man like my brother Gilbert can in the midst of evil retain enough of innocence and strength to bear their eyes upon him and to do a little justice in the terms of the great injustice."

So Cass, who had a plantation with no one to work it, went to Jackson, the capital of the state, and applied himself to the law. Before he left, Gilbert came to him and offered to take over the plantation and work it with a force of his people from his own great place on a share basis. Apparently he was still trying to make Cass rich. But Cass declined, and Gilbert said: "You object to my working it with slaves, is that it? Well, let me tell you, if you sell it, it will be worked with slaves. It is black land and will be watered with black sweat. Does it make any difference then, which black sweat falls on it?" And Cass replied that he was not going to sell the plantation. Then Gilbert, in an apoplectic rage, bellowed: "My God, man, it is land, don't you understand, it is land, and land cries out for man's hand!" But Cass did not sell. He installed a caretaker in the house, and rented a little land to a neighbor for pasture.

He went to Jackson, sat late with his books, and watched trouble gathering over the land. For it was the autumn of 1858 when he went

to Jackson. On January 8, 1861, Mississippi passed the Ordinance of Secession. Gilbert had opposed secession, writing to Cass: "The fools, there is not a factory for arms in the state. Fools not to have prepared themselves if they have foreseen the trouble. Fools, if they have not foreseen it, to act thus in the face of facts. Fools not to temporize now and, if they must, prepare themselves to strike a blow. I have told responsible men to prepare. All fools." To which Cass replied: "I pray much for peace." But later, he wrote: "I have talked with Mr. French, who is, as you know, the Chief of Ordnance, and he says that they have only old muskets for troops, and those but flintlocks. The agents have scraped the state for shotguns, at the behest of Governor Pettus. Shotguns, Mr. French said, and curled his lips. And what shotguns, he added, and then told me of a weapon contributed to the cause, an old musket barrel strapped with metal to a piece of cypress rail crooked at one end. An old slave gave this treasure to the cause, and does one laugh or weep?" (One can guess what Gilbert would have done, reading the letter.) After Jefferson Davis had come back to Mississippi, having resigned from the Senate, and had accepted the command of the troops of Mississippi with the rank of Major-General, Cass called upon him, at the request of Gilbert. He wrote to Gilbert: "The General says that they have given him 10,000 men, but not a stand of modern rifles. But the General also said, they have given me a very fine coat with fourteen brass buttons in front and a black velvet collar. Perhaps we can use the buttons in our shotguns, he said, and smiled."

Cass saw Mr. Davis once more, for he was with Gilbert on the steamboat *Natchez* which carried the new President of the Confederacy on the first stage of his journey from his plantation, "Brierfield," to Montgomery. "We were on old Mr. Tom Leather's boat," Cass wrote in the journal, "which had been supposed to pick up the President at a landing a few miles below Brierfield. But Mr. Davis was delayed in leaving his house and was rowed out to us. I leaned on the rail and saw the little black skiff proceeding toward us over the red water. A man waved from the skiff to us. The captain of the *Natchez* observed the signal, and gave a great blast of his boat's whistle which made our ears tingle and shivered out over the expanse of waters. Our boat stopped and the skiff approached. Mr. Davis was received on board. As the steamboat moved on, Mr. Davis looked back and lifted his hand in salute to the negro servant (Isaiah Montgomery whom I had known at Brierfield) who stood in the skiff, which rocked in the wash of the steamboat, and waved his farewell. Later, as we proceeded upriver toward the bluffs of Vicksburg, he approached my brother,

with whom I was standing on the deck. We had previously greeted him. My brother again, and more intimately, congratulated Mr. Davis, who replied that he could take no pleasure in the honor. I have, he said, always looked upon the Union with a superstitious reverence and have freely risked my life for its dear flag on more than one battlefield, and you, gentlemen, can conceive the sentiment now in me that the object of my attachment for many years has been withdrawn from me. And he continued, I have in the present moment only the melancholy pleasure of an easy conscience. Then he smiled, as he did rarely. Thereupon he took his leave of us and retired within. I had observed how worn to emaciation was his face by illness and care, and how thin the skin lay over the bone. I remarked to my brother that Mr. Davis did not look well. He replied, a sick man, it is a fine how-de-do to have a sick man for a president. I responded that there might be no war, that Mr. Davis hoped for peace. But my brother said, make no mistake, the Yankees will fight and they will fight well and Mr. Davis is a fool to hope for peace. I replied, all good men hope for peace. At this my brother uttered an indistinguishable exclamation and said, what we want now that they've got into this is not a good man but a man who can win, and I am not interested in the luxury of Mr. Davis' conscience. Then my brother and I continued our promenade in silence, and I reflected that Mr. Davis was a good man. But the world is full of good men, I reflect as I write these lines, and yet the world drives hard into darkness and the blindness of blood, even as now late at night I sit in this hotel room in Vicksburg, and I am moved to ask the meaning of our virtue. May God hear our prayer!"

Gilbert received a commission as colonel in a cavalry regiment. Cass enlisted as a private in the Second Mississippi Rifles. "You could be a captain," Gilbert said, "or a major. You've got brains enough for that. And," he added, "damned few of them have." Cass replied that he preferred to be a private soldier, "marching with other men." But he could not tell his brother why, or tell his brother that, though he would march with other men and would carry a weapon in his hand, he would never take the life of an enemy. "I must march with these men who march," he wrote in the journal, "for they are my people and I must partake with them of all bitterness, and that more fully. But I cannot take the life of another man. How can I who have taken the life of my friend, take the life of an enemy, for I have used up my right to blood?" So Cass marched away to war, carrying the musket which was, for him, but a meaningless burden, and wearing on a string, against the flesh of his chest, beneath the fabric of the gray jacket, the ring which had once been Duncan Trice's wedding ring

and which Annabelle Trice, that night in the summer house, had slipped onto his finger as his hand lay on her bosom.

Cass marched to Shiloh, between the fresh fields, for it was early April, and then into the woods that screened the river. (Dogwood and redbud would have been out then.) He marched into the woods, heard the lead whistle by his head, saw the dead men on the ground, and the next day came out of the woods and moved in the sullen withdrawal toward Corinth. He had been sure that he would not survive the battle. But he had survived, and moved down the crowded road "as in a dream." And he wrote: "And I felt that henceforward I should live in that dream." The dream took him into Tennessee again—Chickamauga, Knoxville, Chattanooga, and the nameless skirmishes, and the bullet for which he waited did not find him. He became known as a man of extreme courage. At Chickamauga, when his company wavered in the enemy fire and seemed about to break in its attack, he moved steadily up the slope and could not understand his own inviolability. And the men regrouped, and followed. "It seemed strange to me," he wrote, "that I who in God's will sought death and could not find it, should in my seeking lead men to it who did not seek." When Colonel Hickman congratulated him, he could "find no words" for answer.

But if he had put on the gray jacket in anguish of spirit and in hope of expiation, he came to wear it in pride, for it was a jacket like those worn by the men with whom he marched. "I have seen men do brave things," he wrote, "and they ask for nothing." More and more into the journals crept the comments of the professional soldier, between the prayers and the scruples—criticism of command (of Bragg after Chickamauga), satisfaction and an impersonal pride in manoeuvre or gunnery ("the practice of Marlowe's battery excellent"), and finally the admiration for the feints and delays executed by Johnston's virtuosity on the approaches to Atlanta, at Buzzard's Roost, Snake Creek Gap, New Hope Church, Kenesaw Mountain ("there is always a kind of glory, however stained or obscured, in whatever man's hand does well, and General Johnston does well").

Then, outside Atlanta, the bullet found him. He lay in the hospital and rotted slowly to death. But even before the infection set in, when the wound in the leg seemed scarcely serious, he knew that he would die. "I shall die," he wrote in the journal, "and shall be spared the end and the last bitterness of war. I have lived to do no man good, and have seen others suffer for my sin. I do not question the Justice of God, that others have suffered for my sin, for it may be that only by the suffering of the innocent does God affirm that men are

brothers, and brothers in His Holy Name. And in this room with me now, men suffer for sins not theirs, as for their own. It is a comfort to know that I suffer only for my own." He knew not only that he was to die, but that the war was over. "It is over. It is all over but the dying, which will go on. Though the boil has come to a head and has burst, yet must the pus flow. Men shall yet come together and die in the common guilt of man and in the guilt that sent them hither from far places and distant firesides. But God in His Mercy has spared me the end. Blessed be His Name."

There was no more in the journal. There was only the letter to Gilbert, written in the strange hand, dictated by Cass after he had grown too weak to write. "Remember me, but without grief. If one of us is lucky, it is I . . ."

Atlanta fell. In the last confusion, the grave of Cass Mastern was not marked. Someone at the hospital, a certain Albert Calloway, kept Cass's papers and the ring which he had carried on the cord around his neck, and much later, after the war in fact, sent them to Gilbert Mastern with a courteous note. Gilbert preserved the journal, the letters from Cass, the picture of Cass, and the ring on its cord, and after Gilbert's death, the heir finally sent the packet to Jack Burden, the student of history and the grand-nephew of Cass and Gilbert Mastern. So they came to rest on the little pine table in Jack Burden's bedroom in the slatternly apartment which he occupied with the two other graduate students, the unlucky, industrious, and alcoholic one, and the lucky, idle, and alcoholic one.

Jack Burden lived with the Mastern papers for a year and a half. He wanted to know all of the facts of the world in which Cass and Gilbert Mastern had lived, and he did know many of the facts. And he felt that he knew Gilbert Mastern. Gilbert Mastern had kept no journal, but he felt that he knew him, the man with the head like the block of bare granite, who had lived through one world into another and had been at home in both. But the day came when Jack Burden sat down at the pine table and realized that he did not know Cass Mastern. He did not have to know Cass Mastern to get the degree; he only had to know the facts about Cass Mastern's world. But without knowing Cass Mastern, he could not put down the facts about Cass Mastern's world. Not that Jack Burden said that to himself. He simply sat there at the pine table, night after night, staring at the papers before him, twisting the ring on its cord, staring at the photograph, and writing nothing. Then he would get up to get a drink of water, and would stand in the dark kitchen, holding an old jelly glass in his hand, waiting for the water to run cold from the tap.

London Letter

THERE IS very little political news. All the currents seem to be moving in the same directions as when I wrote to you last—public opinion moving leftward, the Right nevertheless consolidating its power owing to the weakness of the Labour leaders, and the minor left-wing parties quarreling among themselves. It seems to be taken for granted that there will be a general election before the end of the year, and most people assume that the Labour Party is going to fight the election independently, which I cannot believe: at least I cannot believe that they will make a serious effort to win it. The Conservatives, though continuing to disillusion the public by their every act, now feel strong enough to disclaim responsibility for their past mistakes. Many books and articles partially rehabilitating Chamberlain are being published, and a section of the Conservative party, probably financed by Beaverbrook, has started a new paper which appears three times a week (in theory one is not allowed to start new periodicals but there are ways of evading this) and is taking a militantly anti-Socialist line.

There is violent competition by all parties to cash in on the popularity of the USSR. The pinks deprecate any criticism of the USSR on the ground that it “plays into the hands of the Tories,” but on the other hand the Tories seem to be the most pro-Russian of the lot. From the point of view of the M. O. I. and the B. B. C. the only two people who are completely sacrosanct are Stalin and Franco. I imagine that the Russians themselves regard the Tories as their real friends in this country. It may possibly be of some significance that the Soviet press recently made a sharp attack on a group of very Russophile leftwing M.P.’s who had made the suggestion that the flying bombs were manufactured in Spain. These M.P.’s included D. N. Pritt, the alleged “underground” Communist who has been perhaps the most effective pro-Soviet publicist in this country.

Common Wealth continues to score impressive votes at by-elections but is not gaining much in membership and seems to be less and less definite in its policy. It is not even certain whether it intends, as previously advertised, to fight 150 seats at the forthcoming general election, or simply to make local arrangements with acceptable Labour candidates. People inside the party complain that it is infested by middling business-men of the “managerial” type who are resigned to a centralised economy and foresee good pickings in it for themselves. The Communists, who for a short period were opposing the Government and even collaborated with Common Wealth at one or two elections, seem to be swinging to the support of the Conservatives. There have been some faint indications that attempts may be made to revive the almost-extinct

Liberal Party. Otherwise there are no political developments, i. e., in the narrower sense, that I can discern.

Domestic issues continue to occupy most people's attention. India, for instance, has almost dropped out of the news. The chief subjects of discussion are demobilization, re-housing and, for those who are a little longer-sighted, the birth-rate. The housing shortage, already serious, is going to be appalling as soon as the troops come home, and the Government proposes to cope with it by means of prefabricated steel houses which are reasonably convenient but so small as only to have room for one-child families. In theory these temporary shacks are to be scrapped after three years, but everyone assumes that in practice the new houses will not be forthcoming. It is widely recognized that our birth-rate cannot be expected to rise significantly unless people have houses to live in and that re-housing on a big scale is impossible while private property rights are respected. It would be impossible to rebuild London, for instance, without buying out tens of thousands of ground-landlords at fantastic prices. The Conservatives, who are on the whole more concerned about the birth-rate situation than the Left, are at the same time fighting the landlord's battles for him, and try to solve the problem by preaching to the working class the duty of self-sacrifice and the wickedness of birth-control. The Left tends to evade this problem, partly because small families are still vaguely associated with enlightenment, partly because of a certain unwillingness to recognize, or at any rate to say publicly, that a sudden rise in the birth-rate (it has got to rise drastically within ten or twenty years if our population is to be kept up) would mean a drop in the standard of living. There is a vague belief that "Socialism" would somehow make people philoprogenitive again, and much praise of the high Russian birth-rate, without, however, any serious examination of the Russian vital statistics. This is only one of the basic questions that the Left habitually ignores, others being the relation between ourselves and the coloured peoples of the Empire, and the dependence of British prosperity on trade and foreign investments. The Tories are far more willing to admit that these problems exist, though unable to produce any real solution. Very nearly all English leftwingers, from Labourites to Anarchists, have the outlook of people who neither want nor expect power. The Tories are not only more courageous, but they don't make extravagant promises and have no scruples about breaking the promises they do make.

Other highly unpopular subjects are postwar mobility of labour, postwar continuation of food rationing, etc., and the war against Japan. People will, I have no doubt, be ready to go on fighting until Japan is beaten, but their capacity for simply *forgetting* these years of warfare that lie ahead is surprising. In conversation, "When the war stops" invariably means when Germany packs up. The last Mass Observation

report shows a considerable recrudescence of 1918 habits of thought. Everyone expects not only that there will a ghastly muddle over demobilization, but that mass unemployment will promptly return. No one wants to remember that we shall have to keep living for years on a war-time basis and that the switch-over to peacetime production and the recapture of lost markets may entail as great an effort as the war itself. Everyone wants, above all things, a rest. I overhear very little discussion of the wider issues of the war, and I can't discern much popular interest in the kind of peace we should impose on Germany. The newspapers of the Right and Left are outdoing one another in demanding a vindictive peace. Vansittart is now a back number; indeed the more extreme of his one-time followers have brought out a pamphlet denouncing him as pro-German.

The Communists are using the slogan, "Make Germany Pay" (the diehard Tory slogan of 1918) and branding as pro-Nazi anyone who says either that we should make a generous peace or that publication of reasonable peace-terms would hasten the German collapse. The peace-terms that they and other Russophiles advocate are indeed simply a worse version of the Versailles Treaty against which they yapped for twenty years. Thus the dog returns to his vomit, or more exactly to somebody else's vomit. But once again, I can't see that ordinary people want anything of the kind, and if past wars are any guide the troops will all come home pro-German. The implications of the fact that the common people are Russophile but don't want the sort of peace that the Russians are demanding haven't yet sunk in, and leftwing journalists avoid discussing them. The Soviet government now makes direct efforts to interfere with the British press. I suppose that for sheer weariness and the instinct to support Russia at all costs the man-in-the-street might be brought to approve of an unjust peace, but there would be a rapid pro-German reaction, as last time.

There are a few social developments, which again take the same directions as I reported before. Evening dress (i.e., for men) is gradually reappearing. The distinction between first class and third class on the railways is being enforced again. Two years ago it had practically lapsed. Commercial advertisements, which I told you a year or so back were rapidly disappearing, are definitely on the up-grade again, and make use of the snobbery motif more boldly. The Home Guard still exists in as great numbers as before, but is employed largely on the AA guns and seems now to have no political colour of one kind or the other. It now consists to a great extent of youths who are conscripted in at 16 or 17. For boys younger than this there are various cadet corps and the Air Training Corps, and even for young girls a uniformed formation named vaguely the Girls' Training Corps. All this is something quite new in English life, pre-military training having been practically confined to the middle and upper classes before the war. Everything grows shab-

bier and more rickety. Sixteen people in a railway carriage designed for ten is quite common. The countryside has quite changed its face, the once green meadows having changed into cornfields, and in the remotest places one cannot get away from the roar of airplanes, which has become the normal background noise, drowning the larks.

There are very few literary developments to report. After nine months as a literary editor I am startled and frightened by the lack of talent and vitality. The crowd who are grouped about *New Road*, *Now* and *Poetry, London*—and I suppose these are “the movement” in so far as there is one—give me the impression of fleas hopping among the ruins of a civilization. There are endless anthologies and other scissor-and-paste books, and enormous output of unreadable pamphlets from every kind of political party and religious body, in spite of the paper shortage. On the other hand innumerable standard books are out of print and unobtainable. Attempts are constantly being made in short-lived reviews to revivify the various regional literatures, Scottish, Welsh, Irish and Northern Irish. These movements always have a strong nationalist and separatist tinge, sometimes bitterly anti-English, and will print anything however bad which is politically O.K. But the various nationalisms are so to speak interchangeable. The leading Anglophobes all contribute to one another’s papers, and the London pacifist intellectuals pop up in all of them. There are also signs, which I haven’t been able to investigate yet, that Australian literature is at last getting on its own feet.

No more news to speak of. This has been a foul summer, everything happening at the wrong time and hardly any fruit. I have been tied so tight to this beastly town that for the first time in my life I have not heard a cuckoo this year. . . . After the wail of the siren comes the zoom-zoom-zoom of the bomb, and as it draws nearer you get up from your table and squeeze yourself into some corner that flying glass is not likely to reach. Then BOOM!, the windows rattle in their sockets, and you go back to work. There are disgusting scenes in the Tube stations at night, sordid piles of bedding cluttering up the passageways and hordes of dirty-faced children playing round the platforms at all hours. Two nights ago, about midnight, I came on a little girl of five “minding” her younger sister, aged about two. The tiny child had got hold of a scrubbing brush with which she was scrubbing the filthy stones of the platform, and then sucking the bristles. I took it away from her and told the elder girl not to let her have it. But I had to catch my train, and no doubt the poor little brat would again be eating filth in another couple of minutes. This kind of thing is happening everywhere. However, the disorganization and consequent neglect of children hasn’t been serious compared with 1940.

GEORGE ORWELL

Franz Kafka: A Revatuation

(On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of his death)

HANNAH ARENDT

TWENTY YEARS ago, in the summer of 1924, Franz Kafka died at the age of forty. His reputation grew steadily in Austria and Germany during the twenties and in France, England and America during the thirties. His admirers in these countries, though strongly disagreeing about the inherent meaning of his work, agree, oddly enough, on one essential point: all of them are struck by something new in his art of story-telling, a quality of modernity which appears nowhere else with the same intensity and unequivocalness. This is surprising because Kafka—in striking contrast with other favorite authors of the intelligentsia—engaged in no technical experiments whatsoever; without in any way changing the German language, he stripped it of its involved constructions until it became clear and simple like everyday speech purified of slang and negligence. The simplicity, the easy naturalness of his language may indicate that Kafka's modernity and the difficulty of his work have very little to do with that modern complication of the inner life which is always looking out for new and unique techniques to express new and unique feelings. The common experience of Kafka's readers is one of general and vague fascination, even in stories they fail to understand, a precise recollection of strange and seemingly absurd images and descriptions—until one day the hidden meaning reveals itself to them with the sudden evidence of a truth simple and incontestable.

Let us begin with the novel *The Trial*, about which a small library of interpretations has been published. It is the story of a man who is tried according to laws which he can't discover and finally is executed without having been able to find out what it is all about.

In his search for the real reasons for his ordeal, he learns that behind it "a great organization is at work which . . . not only employs corrupt wardens, stupid inspectors, and examining magistrates . . . but also has at its disposal a judicial hierarchy of high, indeed, of the highest rank, with an indispensable and numerous retinue of servants, clerks, police and other assistants, perhaps even hangmen." He

takes an advocate who tells him at once that the only sensible thing to do is to adapt oneself to existing conditions and not to criticize them. He turns to the prison chaplain for advice and the chaplain preaches the hidden greatness of the system and orders him not to ask for the truth, "for it is not necessary to accept everything as true, one must accept it as necessary." "A melancholy conclusion," said K., "it turns lying into a universal principle."

The force of the machinery in which the K. of *The Trial* is caught lies precisely in this appearance of necessity on the one hand, and in the admiration of the people for necessity on the other. Lying for the sake of necessity appears as something sublime; and a man who does not submit to the machinery, though submission may mean his death, is regarded as a sinner against some kind of divine order. In the case of K., submission is obtained not by force, but simply through the increasing feeling of guilt which the unbased accusation has originated in the accused man. This feeling, of course, is based in the last instance on the fact that no man is free from guilt. And since K., a busy bank employee, has never had time to ponder such generalities, he is induced into exploring certain unfamiliar regions of his ego. This, in turn, leads him into confusion, into mistaking the organized and wicked evil of the world surrounding him for some necessary expression of that general guiltiness which is harmless and almost innocent if compared with the bad will that turns "lying into a universal principle" and uses and abuses even man's justified humbleness.

The feeling of guilt, therefore, which gets hold of K. and starts an interior development of its own, changes and models its victim until he fits into the situation of standing a trial. It is this feeling which makes him capable of entering the world of necessity and injustice and lying, of playing a role according to the rules, of adapting himself to existing conditions. This interior development of the hero—his *éducation sentimentale*—constitutes a second level of the story which accompanies the functioning of the bureaucratic machine. The events of the exterior world and the interior development coincide finally in the last scene of the execution, an execution to which, although it is without reason, K. submits without a struggle.

It has been characteristic of our history conscious century that its worst crimes have been committed in the name of some kind of necessity or in the name—and this amounts to the same thing—of the "wave of the future." For people who submit to this, who renounce their freedom and their right of action, even though they may pay the price of death for their delusion, anything more charitable

can hardly be said than the words with which Kafka concludes *The Trial*: "It was as if he meant the shame of it to outlive him."

That *The Trial* implies a critique of the bureaucratic regime of the Austrian pre-war government whose numerous and conflicting nationalities were dominated by a homogeneous hierarchy of officials has been understood from the first appearance of the novel. Kafka, an employee of a workmen's insurance company and a loyal friend of many eastern European Jews for whom he had had to obtain permits to stay in the country, had a very intimate knowledge of the political conditions of his country. He knew that a man caught in the bureaucratic machinery is already condemned; and that no man can expect justice from judicial procedures where interpretation of the law is coupled with the administering of lawlessness, and where the chronic inaction of the interpreters is compensated by a bureaucratic machine whose senseless automatism has the privilege of ultimate decision. But to the public of the twenties, bureaucracy did not seem an evil great enough to explain the horror and terror expressed in the novel. People were more frightened by the tale than by the real thing. They looked therefore for other, seemingly deeper, interpretations, and they found them, following the fashion of the day, in a mysterious depiction of religious reality, the expression of a terrible theology.

The reason for this misinterpretation which in my opinion is as fundamental, though not as crude, a misunderstanding as the psycho-analytical variety, is of course to be found in Kafka's work itself. It is true, Kafka depicted a society which had established itself as a substitute for God, and he described men who looked upon the laws of society as though they were divine laws—unchangeable through the will of men. In other words, what is wrong with the world in which Kafka's heroes are caught is precisely its deification, its pretense of representing a divine necessity. Kafka wants to destroy this world by exposing its hideous and hidden structure, by contrasting reality and pretense. But the modern reader, or at least the reader of the twenties, fascinated by paradoxes as such, and attracted by mere contrasts, was no longer willing to listen to reason. His understanding of Kafka reveals more about himself than about Kafka—reveals his fitness for this society, even if it be the fitness of an "élite"; and he is quite serious when it comes to Kafka's sarcasm about the lying necessity and the necessary lying as divine law.

Kafka's next great novel, *The Castle*, brings us back to the same world, which this time is seen not through the eyes of somebody who

finally submits to necessity and who learns of its government only because he has been accused by it, but through the eyes of quite another K. This K. comes to it out of his own free will, as a stranger, and wants to realize there a very definite purpose—to establish himself, to become a fellow-citizen, build up a life and marry, to find work and be a useful member of society.

The outstanding characteristic of the K. in *The Castle* is that he is interested only in universals, in those things to which all men have a natural right. But while he demands no more than this, it is quite obvious that he will be satisfied with nothing less. He is easily enough persuaded to change his profession, but an occupation, "regular work," he demands as his right. The troubles of K. start because only the Castle can fulfill his demands; and the Castle will do this either as an "act of favor" or if he consents to become its secret employee — "an ostensible village worker whose real occupation is determined through Barnabas," the court messenger.

Since his demands are nothing more than the inalienable rights of man, he cannot accept them as an "act of favor from the Castle." At this point the villagers step in; they try to persuade K. that he lacks experience and does not know that the whole of life is constituted and dominated by favor and disfavor, by grace and disgrace, both as inexplicable, as hazardous as good and bad luck. To be in the right or in the wrong, they try to explain to him, is part of "fate" which no one can alter, which one can only fulfil.

K's strangeness therefore receives an additional meaning: he is strange not only because he does not "belong to the village, and does not belong to the Castle," but because he is the only normal and healthy human being in a world where everything human and normal, love and work and fellowship, has been wrested out of men's hands to become a gift endowed from without—or as Kafka puts it, from above. Whether as fate, as blessing or as curse, it is something mysterious, something which man may receive or be denied, but never can create. Accordingly, K.'s aspiration, far from being commonplace and obvious, is, in fact, exceptional and scandalous. He puts up a fight for the minimum as if it were something which embraced the sum total of all possible demands. For the villagers K.'s strangeness consists not of his being deprived of the essentials of life but of his asking for them.

K.'s stubborn singleness of purpose, however, opens the eyes of some of the villagers; his behavior teaches them that human rights may be worth fighting for, that the rule of the Castle is not divine law and, consequently, can be attacked. He makes them see, as they

put it, that "men who suffered our kind of experiences, who are beset by our kind of fear . . . who tremble at every knock at the door, cannot see things straight." And they add: "How lucky are we that you came to us!" The fight of the stranger, however, had no other result than his being an example. His struggle ends with a death of exhaustion—a perfectly natural death. But since he, unlike the K. of *The Trial*, did not submit to what appeared as necessity there is no shame to outlive him.

The reader of Kafka's stories is very likely to pass through a stage during which he will be inclined to think of Kafka's nightmare of a world as a trivial though, perhaps, psychologically interesting forecast of a world to be. But this world actually has come to pass. The generation of the forties, and especially those who have the doubtful advantage of having lived under the most terrible regime history has so far produced, know that the terror of Kafka is adequate to the true nature of the thing called bureaucracy—the replacing of government by administration and of laws by arbitrary decrees. We know that Kafka's construction was not a mere nightmare.

If Kafka's description of this machinery really were prophecy, it would be as vulgar a prediction as all the other countless predictions that have plagued us since the beginning of our century. It was Charles Peguy, himself frequently mistaken for a prophet, who once remarked: "Determinism as far as it can be conceived . . . is perhaps nothing else but the law of residues." This sentence alludes to a profound truth. In so far as life is decline which ultimately leads to death, it can be foretold. In a dissolving society which blindly follows the natural course of ruin, catastrophe can be foreseen. Only salvation, not ruin, comes unexpectedly, for salvation, not ruin, depends upon the liberty and the will of men. Kafka's so-called prophecies were but a sober analysis of underlying structures which today have come into the open. These ruinous structures were supported, and the process of ruin itself accelerated, by the belief, almost universal in his time, in a necessary and automatic process to which man must submit. The words of the prison-chaplain in *The Trial* reveal the faith of officials as a faith in necessity of which they are shown as the functionaries. But as a functionary of necessity, man becomes a functionary of the natural law of ruin, thereby degrading himself into the natural tool of destruction which may be accelerated through the perverted use of human capacities. But just as a house which has been abandoned by men to its natural fate will slowly follow the course of ruin which somehow is inherent in all human work, so surely the

world, fabricated by men and constituted according to human and not natural laws, will become again part of nature and will follow the law of ruin, if man decides to become himself part of nature, a blind though accurate tool of natural laws, and renounces his supreme faculty of creating laws himself and even prescribing them to nature.

If progress is supposed to be an inevitable superhuman law which embraces all periods of history alike, in whose meshes humanity inescapably got caught, then progress indeed is best imagined and most exactly described in the following lines quoted from the last work of Walter Benjamin:

The angel of history . . . turns his face to the past. Where we see a chain of events, he sees a single catastrophe which unrelentingly piles ruins on ruins and hurls them at his feet. He wishes he could stay—to awaken the dead and to join together the fragments. But a wind blows from Paradise, gets caught in his wings and is so strong that the angel cannot close them. This wind drives him irresistibly into the future to which he turns his back, while the pile of ruins before him towers to the skies. What we call progress is this wind.

In spite of the confirmation of more recent times that Kafka's nightmare of a world was a real possibility whose actuality surpassed even his atrocity stories, we still experience in reading his novels and stories a very definite feeling of unreality. First, there are his heroes who do not even have a name but are frequently introduced simply by initials; they certainly are not persons whom we could meet in a real world, for they lack all the many superfluous detailed characteristics which together make a real individual. They move in a society where everybody is assigned a role and everybody has a job; and they are contrasted only by the very fact that their role is indefinite, lacking as they do a defined place in the world of jobholders. And all of it, whether small fellows like the common people in *The Castle*, who are afraid of losing their jobs, or big fellows like the officials in *The Castle* and *The Trial*, strive at some kind of superhuman perfection and live in complete identification with their jobs. They have no psychological qualities because they are nothing other than jobholders. When, for instance, in the novel *Amerika*, the head porter of a hotel mistakes somebody's identity, he says: "How could I go on being the head porter here if I mistook a person for another . . . In all my thirty years of service I've never mistaken anyone yet." To err is to lose one's job; therefore, he cannot even admit the possibility of an error. Jobholders whom society forces to deny the human possibility of erring, cannot remain human but must act as though they were supermen. All of Kafka's employees, officials and functionaries are very far from being perfect, but they act on an identical assumption of omniscience.

An ordinary novelist might describe the conflict in a functionary between his function and his private life; he might show how the function has eaten up the private life of the person, or how his private life—the possession of a family, for example—has forced him into abandoning all human traits and into fulfilling his function as though he were inhuman. Kafka confronts us at once with the result of such a process, because the result is all that counts. Omnicompetence is the motor of the machinery in which Kafka's heroes get caught, which is senseless in itself and destructive, but which functions without friction.

One of the main topics of Kafka's stories is the construction of this machinery, the description of its functioning and of the attempts of his heroes to destroy it for the sake of simple human values. These nameless heroes are not common men whom one could find and meet in the street, but the model of the "common man" as an ideal of humanity; thus they are intended to prescribe a norm to society. Like the "forgotten man" of Chaplin's films, Kafka's "common man" has been forgotten by a society which consists of small and big fellows. For the motor of his activities is good will, in contrast to the motor of the society with which he is at odds, which is functioning. This good will, of which the hero is only a model, has a function too; it unmasks almost innocently the hidden structures of society which obviously frustrate the most common needs and destroy the best intentions of man. It exposes the misconstruction of a world where the man of good will who does not want to make a career is simply lost. It helps reveal these aspects of respectability before they are actually pulled apart.

The impression of unreality and modernity with which Kafka's stories strike us is mainly due to this supreme concern of his with functioning, combined with his utter neglect of aspects and his lack of interest in the description of the world as phenomenon and appearance. Therefore, it is a misunderstanding to class him with the surrealists. While the surrealist tries to give as many and contradictory aspects of reality as possible, Kafka only invents freely the aspects, in relation to functioning, which is his main concern. While the surrealist's favorite method is always photomontage, Kafka's technique could best be described as the construction of models. If a man wants to build a house or if he wants to know a house well enough to be able to foretell its stability, he will get a blueprint of the building or draw one up himself. Kafka's stories are such blueprints; they are in a sense the product of thinking rather than of mere

sensational experience. Compared with a real house, of course, a blueprint is a very unreal affair; but without it the house could not have come into being, nor could one recognize the foundations and structures that make it a real house. The same imagination—namely that imagination which in the words of Kant creates “another nature out of the material that actual nature gives it”—is to be used for the building of houses as for the understanding of them. Blueprints cannot be understood except by those who are willing and able to realize by their own imagination the real intentions and the future aspects.

This effort of real imagination is demanded from the readers of Kafka's stories. Therefore, the mere receptive reader of novels, whose only activity is identification with one of the characters, is at a complete loss when reading Kafka. The curious reader, who out of a certain frustration in life looks for ersatz in the romantic world of novels where things happen which do not happen in his life, will feel even more deceived and frustrated by Kafka than by his own life. For in Kafka's books there is no element of day-dreaming or wishful thinking. Only the reader for whom life and the world and man are so complicated, of such terrible interest, that he wants to find out some truth about them and who therefore turns to story-tellers for insight into experiences common to us all, may turn to Kafka and his blueprints, which sometimes in a page, or even in a single phrase, expose the naked structure of happenings.

In the light of these reflections we may consider one of the most simple of Kafka's stories, a very characteristic one which he entitled:

A COMMON CONFUSION

A common experience resulting in a common confusion. A. has to transact important business with B. in H. He goes to H. for a preliminary interview, accomplishes the journey there in ten minutes, and the journey back in the same time, and in returning boasts to his family of his expedition. The next day he goes again to H., this time to settle his business finally. As that by all appearances will require several hours, A. leaves very early in the morning. But although all the accessory circumstances, at least in A.'s estimation, are exactly the same as the day before, it takes him ten hours this time to reach H. When he arrives there quite exhausted in the evening he is informed that B., annoyed at his absence, had left an hour before to go to A.'s village, and they must have passed each other on the road. A. is advised to wait. But in his anxiety about his business he sets off at once and hurries home.

This time he achieves the journey, without paying any particular attention to the fact, exactly in a second. At home he learns that B. had arrived quite early, immediately after A.'s departure, indeed that he had met A. on the threshold and reminded him of his business; but A. had replied that he had no time to spare, he must go at once.

In spite of this incomprehensible behavior of A., however, B. had stayed on to wait for A.'s return. It is true, he had asked several times whether A. was not back yet, but he was still sitting up in A.'s room. Overjoyed at the

opportunity of seeing B. at once and explaining everything to him, A. rushes upstairs. He is almost at the door, when he stumbles, twists a sinew, and almost fainting with the pain, incapable even of uttering a cry, only able to moan faintly in the darkness, he hears B. — impossible to tell whether at a great distance or quite near him — stamping down the stairs in a violent rage and vanishing for good.

The technique here seems very clear. All essential factors involved in this common experience of failure to carry out an appointment, such as: overzealousness (which makes A. leave too early and overlook B. on the staircase), misconcentration on details (A. thinks of the journey instead of his essential purpose in meeting B., which makes the way far longer than it was when measured without paying attention), and finally the typical mischievous tricks by which objects and circumstances conspire to make such failures final—are found in the story. These are the author's raw material. Because his stories are built up out of factors contributing to typical human failure, and not out of a real event, they seem at first like a wild and humorous exaggeration of actual happenings or like some inescapable logic gone wild. This impression of exaggeration, however, disappears entirely, if we consider the story as what it actually is: not the report of a confusing event, but the model of confusion itself. What remains is a cognition of confusion presented in such a way that it will stimulate laughter, a humorous excitement that permits man to prove his essential freedom through a kind of serene superiority to his own failures.

From what has been said so far it may become clear that the novel-writer Franz Kafka was no novelist in the classical, the 19th century, sense of the word. The basis for the classical novel was an acceptance of society as such, a submission to life as it happens, a conviction that greatness of destiny is beyond human virtues and human vice. It presupposed the decline of the citizen, who, during the days of the French Revolution, had attempted to govern the world with human laws. It pictured the growth of the bourgeois individual for whom life and the world had become a place of events and who desired more events and more happenings than the usually narrow and secure framework of his own life could offer him. Today these novelists who were always in competition (even if imitating reality) with reality itself, have been supplanted by the reporter. In our world real events, real destinies, have long surpassed the wildest imagination of novelists.

The pendant to the quiet and security of the bourgeois world in which the individual expected from life his fair share of events

and excitements, and never quite getting enough of them, were the great men, the geniuses and exceptions who in the eyes of this same world represented the wonderful and mysterious incarnation of something superhuman which could be called: destiny (as in the case of Napoleon), or history (as in the case of Hegel), or the call of God (as in the case of Kierkegaard, who believed himself to be an example stated by God and therefore an "exception"), or necessity (as in the case of Nietzsche, who declared himself to be "a necessity"). The highest idea of man was the man with a mission, a call, which he had to fulfill. The greater the mission, the greater the man. All that man, seen as this incarnation of something superhuman, could achieve was *amor fati* (Nietzsche), love of destiny, conscious identification with what happened to him. Greatness was no longer sought in the work done but in the person himself; genius was no longer thought of as a gift bestowed by the gods upon men who themselves remained essentially the same. The whole person had become the incarnation of genius and as such was no longer regarded as a simple mortal. Kant, who was essentially the philosopher of the French Revolution, still defined genius as "the innate mental disposition through which Nature gives the rule to Art." I do not agree with this definition; I think that genius is rather the disposition through which Mankind gives the rule to Art. But this is beside the point. For what strikes us in Kant's definition as well as in his further explanation is the utter absence of that empty greatness which during the entire 19th century had made of genius the forerunner of the superman, a kind of monster.

What makes Kafka appear so modern and at the same time so strange among his contemporaries in the prewar world is precisely that he refused to submit to any happenings (for instance, he did not want marriage to "happen" to him as it merely happens to most); he was not fond of the world as it was given to him, not even fond of nature (whose stability exists only so long as we "leave it at peace"). He wanted to build up a world in accordance with human needs and human dignities, a world where man's actions are determined by himself and which is ruled by his laws and not by mysterious forces emanating from above or from below. Moreover his most poignant wish was to be part of such a world—he did not care to be a genius or the incarnation of any kind of greatness.

This of course does not mean, as it is sometimes asserted, that Kafka was modest. It is he who once, in genuine astonishment, noted in his diaries, "Every sentence I write has perfection"—which is a simple statement of truth, but was certainly not made by a modest man. He was not modest; he was humble.

In order to become part of such a world (as he tentatively tried to describe it at the end, the happy end, of his third novel *Amerika*) he first had to anticipate the destruction of a misconstructured world. Through this anticipated destruction he carried the image, the supreme figure of man as a model of good will, of man the *fabricator mundi*, the world-builder who can get rid of misconstructions and reconstruct his world. And since these heroes are only models of good will and left in the anonymity, the abstractness of the general, shown only in the very function good will may have in this world of ours, his novels seem to have a singular appeal as though he wanted to say: This man of good will may be anybody and everybody, perhaps even you and me.

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A Reunion

JEAN STAFFORD

LIKE cooled-off lovers meeting again after a long separation, we were excessively courteous. We plied our interrogations with a well-bred inattention to their answers and we diligently observed all those amenities which are calculated to tame a difficult encounter. My father's letter (his calligraphy, I had noted, had neither become less neat nor more mature) had not stated his reason for inviting me to visit him. Moreover, in my reply, I had not told him why I was accepting, and I concluded that we were each activated by no more than curiosity, as the lovers would be, to know what alterations the years had accomplished in the other.

I learned that for seven years my father had, as usual, done a little reading, been occasionally ill, entertained a few guests, and had largely spent his time gardening. He learned that I had had an equal share of bad and good luck. Throughout the first hour of our reunion, coinciding happily (and by no means accidentally) with dinner, we exchanged, like the calling cards of strangers, the names of his guests and the names of the places where I had lived. We pursued the recent tributaries of our lives and never once returned to seek the old meanderings of our mutual experience.

Proud of his garden and because there was a full moon that night, my father took me out after our coffee to show me the gladiolas and the dahlias which had commenced to bloom a week or so before. As he stooped amongst them to caress their petals, I noticed for the first time that he was an old man. Livid and sharp as one of his trees in winter, his large and noble nose and his insistent cheekbones had been uncovered nearly to the skeleton, yet, elsewhere, particularly in the hands that quivered as they reached toward the flowers, the skin was too ample an integument and stood up in limp ridges over the bones. He was a small man. Now he seemed even smaller, and he had dried up everywhere save in his brown eyes. He was like one of the bearded weeds that every summer invaded his garden; had I touched his skin, I thought, I would have found it harsh like the hollyhock leaf. Into his voice, which had always been half an octave higher

than a man's should be, there had crept the note of senility's sour protestations. Yet, in a sense, he looked exactly as he had when I last saw him: his seven static years had done no more than reinforce what had been there all along.

It was here that I had seen him last. I had told him goodbye while he pruned the rhododendrons. Then, I had longed to confirm our kinship by some gesture which, no matter how brief, would unite us for its duration: a look, perceiving me at last from the eyes that benevolently studied the shrub and shears, a clasp of the hands that tenderly ministered to the leaves and blossoms, or a word from the mouth that an hour ago had elegantly and incisively said, "Of course you may stay as long as you like. It is your privilege." I had come out to him, believing that the crisis had not been reached yet, that there was still time to deflect the catastrophe. But he did not look up, and the stretch of grass between us seemed unnavigable. As I stared at him stupidly, a naive tear in either eye, I realized that my misery was gauche for I knew that my father did not see our estrangement in the heroic dimensions that I did. And so I had turned at last and facing the house, my back to him, had said, "Well, goodbye." Before he echoed me, I heard, several times, the snip of his shears and the rustling of the rhododendron leaves.

We moved tonight from shrub to shrub and from the bed of zinnias to the rose-bushes, and he murmured that he hoped I was not bored, although he knew I was not interested in flowers ("something, as you remember," he said, "I never understood in you"), but that it was his habit to spend half an hour in the garden every evening after dinner. An abrupt movement in the grass unnerved my citted feet and I asked my father if there were snakes here still.

"Of course," he laughed. "One wouldn't want one's garden to be incomplete. Besides, they kill the spiders."

We slowly approached the far end of the garden where his splendid azaleas were planted and the japonica and where three mountain ash trees dropped their scarlet globules on to my mother's grave. Our advance, deliberate and silent like that of acolytes toward the sanctuary, enclosed us in a parenthesis whose solemnity, for me, was trumped-up, and I, to demolish the ambiguity of my role, said lightly, "How the ash trees have flourished."

"Yes. The soil here welcomes anything. John Stuart, whom you may remember, was surprised when he came to visit me some years ago, at my choice of decoration for this part of the garden. 'Red?' says he. 'And something so foreign to us? I'd thought you would plant junipers.' And still, when I had explained my reason to him,

he had to agree that I'd been right. You recall the reason? That she loved this special red? I have no doubt other friends of mine have wondered, but they've been too tactful to enquire."

"Too tactful?"

"Why, yes, to be sure. Isn't that a kind of tact? To speak as little as possible of the dead to the bereft?"

He had stopped some paces from the gravestone and had turned away from me to pluck a dying leaf from an azalea plant, but I knew that his face, in spite of the changes of age, wore an expression of anger and yet of satisfaction that I had seen so often from the earliest days of my childhood. For, adroitly, he had trapped me into revealing for the millionth time, my ignorance (he had, seven years ago, called it my "willful ignorance") of his grief which, like a precious flower, had under his care become immortal, as fresh, as faultless as on the day she died and I was born. And yet, he liked to coax a canker to its immaculate petals to cherish them the more when he had cleansed them. Just as he was pulling off the limp yellowing leaf from the azalea, gently, so as not to disturb the delicate living tissues of the plant, so he was removing my careless blight from his heart's rose.

He was reluctant to leave the garden and in that hallowed place—for every flower and tree and bush was dedicated like the appointments of an altar—we would not quarrel, not even in lowered voices and not even in the language so shrewdly civil we had used, on the other occasion, to deceive the servants who might be eavesdropping. It occurred to me, seeing him delay our return to the house by examining the soil about the oleanders and rambling thoughtfully about the lily pond, consuming more than half an hour in an aimless survey of his consecrated grove, that if he were able to predict me better, he would like to prolong my stay; for who but I could so often and yet so impotently threaten his exquisite obsession? Whose guilt was so ineradicable? And I wondered if this was why he had written me after so many years: a curiosity to know if I *had* become more predictable, and if he could now check me before I had gone too far. He had been careful to name no term for my visit. At any moment, he might say, as he had done before, "Of course you may stay as long as you like, but surely you are intelligent enough to see that we can never be at peace with one another."

"I have put a new floor in the summer house," he said. "Perhaps you would like to see it. If I remember rightly, the summer house was all you really cared about in my little garden." He smiled beseechingly at me like the great lady deprecating her "little house" to her poor cousins. Indeed, I had liked the summer house and had often played

there, for it was the only place in the garden where I was not haunted by my mother's ghost and by the slumbrous fragrance of my father's offerings to her. One day I had marked with brilliant blue paint the diamonds patterned on the floor by the sunlight coming through the lattice work. Now my marks, made with an enamel advertised as indelible, were gone.

We sat down on the circular bench, my father gazing out the doorway in the direction of the gravestone, a slab of marble beneath whose ivory surface a clouded rosiness showed through. He spoke almost to himself, "No, of course you wouldn't remember John Stuart." I did not contradict him, though I perfectly recalled his gaunt and sentimental friend who had come, fifteen years before, at the time my mother's skeleton was transferred from the graveyard to the garden. Evening after evening, I heard their low voices behind the closed door of the library. One night, they walked along the terrace below my windows and I heard John Stuart say, "What a saint you are!" And once, when, at my father's request, I had set out before them glasses and a decanter of brandy, he said, "She is the image of her mother." There was a precise moment of silence, and then my father said, "I am thinking of hiring a tutor. Her Latin is very bad." His voice was even and remote with distaste.

"I noticed this evening at dinner," he said, "that your hair seems a little darker." I did not miss the satisfaction in his words. Anything that made me unlike my mother called forth his secret admiration. As always before, I blushed and quickly diverted his attention from my appearance. "Your new floor is handsome," I said.

"Oh, yes," he said starting. "Yes, it will do very well." As he bent over to look at it, a large black bug scuttled across the floor and stopped near his foot. I saw him shudder and lift his foot to crush it, but he did not. "A spider," he said. "We have a great many of them at this time of year. Some are poisonous." He continued to gaze at it and in a moment slowly lifted his foot again and brought it down lightly, "Not to make a mess," he whispered. I heard a brittle cracking and my father said, "Oh, what a pity. It wasn't a spider, only a harmless beetle."

He had not killed it. The creature struggled with a frenzied energy and worked itself onto its back, then tossed and labored to right itself, waving weary legs, straightening and flexing them, pausing and wildly fluttering them again. It gained a little and lay upon its side, shuttered a mangled wing, and helplessly rolled over on its back.

"It's not dead," I said. "Hadrn't you better kill it?"

His smile was mutilated by the moonlight. It was at once inquiring and patronizing. He said, "Why?"

"I don't know. Only perhaps it's suffering."

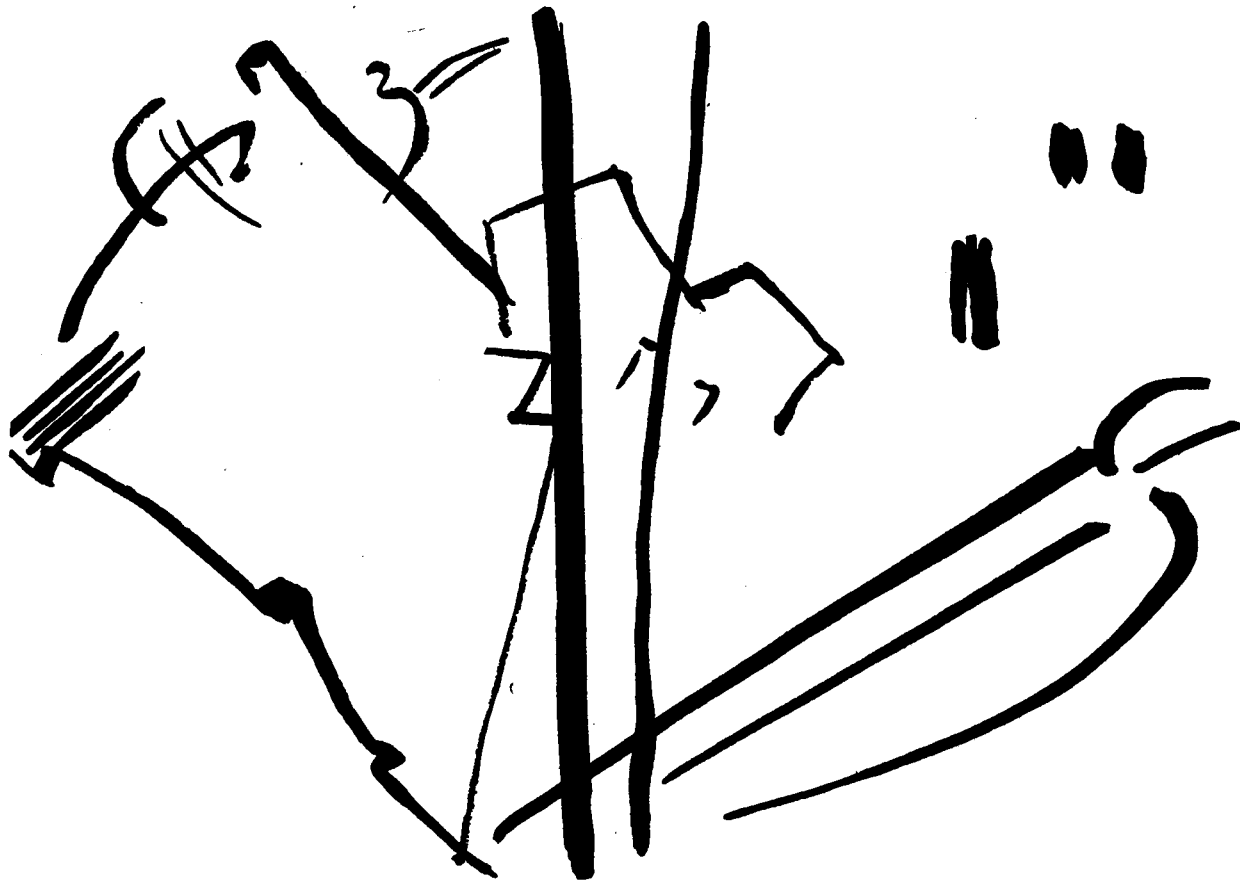
"Let me allow you to complete the murder," he said, and as I stood up and started to move towards the dying bug, he added, "I couldn't step on it again myself. The shell cracking under my foot gave me a horrible feeling that I was breaking human bones."

"Then I can't *now*!" I cried. I returned to my place. For some time we remained there, watching the beetle's noiseless fit; it seemed hours later that a sudden darkness passed over the floor of the summer house and my father sprang to his feet with a cry. But immediately himself again, as though he had not uttered it, as though the sound were as unconnected with us as the distant hoot of an owl, he said, "You must excuse me. I go to bed early, though I don't sleep. Feel free to stay as long as you like. I can send a lantern out to you."

He lighted a lantern he had taken down from the shelf above the bench and his face, illumined briefly, revealed no more than had his voice, the dismay that had made him cry out.

"No, thank you," I said. "The moon will come out again. I can see without it anyhow."

I followed him out the door and lay down upon the grass. I leaned on my elbow and watched him pass through the opening in the hedge. His lantern's arc caricatured him as a ghost out-of-joint; his head was peaked by the phenomenon of the light and in place of arms, two narrow wings listlessly swung while the fattened torso wambled. The sad light diminished and was absorbed. The moon shone forth again and in its light, as I turned and leaned upon the other elbow, I could see the beetle on the floor of the summer house still pitching in its morbid dance. I lay back upon the grass and seemed to fall into the depths of the earth with a forcible weariness and closed my eyes and, perhaps for a few minutes, dozed. Then, suddenly confused as one whose dream of last night contradicts or corresponds to today's facts, it occurred to me that the beetle actually was dead and had been from the first and that the changeable moon's ruffling chiaroscuro had misled us. I went into the summer house and stooping down, saw that some time since, its life arrested, death had chosen for its final attitude that of a human foetus with curved thorax protected by the folded, tattered wings. I left it in its desolate repose and as I passed through the garden on my way to the house, I shook the lowest branch of the middle mountain ash tree so that in the silence, the crimson fruit, soft as it was, made a faint sound as it fell on the gravestone.



WASSILY KANDINSKY: Landscape 1911, Brush Drawing
(*Reproduction Contributed by Nierendorf Gallery, New York City*)

Poems

SONGS FOR A COLORED SINGER

I.

The time has come to call a halt;
and so it ends.
He's gone off with his other friends.
He needn't try to make amends,
'cause this occasion's all his fault.
Through rain and dark I see his face
He's drinking in the warm pink glow
across the street at Flossie's place,
to th'accompaniment of the piccolo.

The time has come to call a halt.
I met him walking with Varella
and hit him twice with my umbrella.
Perhaps that occasion was my fault,
but the time has come to call a halt.

Go drink your wine and go get tight.
Let the piccolo play.
I'm sick of all your fussing anyway.
Now I'm pursuing my own way.
I'm leaving on the bus tonight.
Far down the highway wet and black
I'll ride and ride and not come back.
I'm going to go and take the bus
and find someone monogamous.

The time has come to call a halt.
I've borrowed fifteen dollars fare
and it will take me anywhere.
For this occasion's all his fault.
The time has come to call a halt.

II.

A washing hangs upon the line,
but it's not mine.
None of the things that I can see
belong to me.
The neighbor's got a radio with an aerial;
we got a little portable.
They got a lot of closet space;
we got a suitcase.

I say, "Le Roy, just how much are we owing?
Something I can't comprehend,
the more we got the more we spend. . . ."
He only answers, "Let's get going."
Le Roy, you're earning too much money now.

I sit and look at our back yard
and find it very hard
that all we got for all his dollars and cents
's a pile of bottles by the fence.
He's faithful and he's kind
but he sure has an inquiring mind.
He's seen a lot; he's bound to see the rest,
and if I protest

Le Roy will answer with a frown,
"Darling, when I earns I spends.
The world is wide; it still extends . . .
I'm going to get a job in the next town."
Le Roy, you're earning too much money now.

III.

Lullaby.
Adult and child
sink to their rest.
At sea the big ship sinks and dies,
lead in its breast.

Lullaby.

Let nations rage,
let nations fall.

The shadow of the crib makes an enormous cage
upon the wall.

Lullaby.

Sleep on and on,
war's over soon.

Drop the silly, harmless toy,
pick up the moon.

Lullaby.

If they should say
you have no sense,
don't you mind them; it won't make
much difference.

Lullaby.

Adult and child
sink to their rest.

At sea the big ship sinks and dies,
lead in its breast.

IV.

What's that shining in the leaves,
the shadowy leaves,
like tears when somebody grieves,
shining, shining in the leaves.

Is it dew or is it tears,
dew or tears,
hanging there for years and years
like a heavy dew of tears.

Then that dew begins to fall,
roll down and fall.
Maybe it's not tears at all.
See it, see it roll and fall.

Hear it falling on the ground,
hear, all around.
That is not a tearful sound,
beating, beating on the ground.

See it lying there like seeds,
like black seeds.
See it taking root like weeds,
faster, faster than the weeds,

all the shining seeds take root,
conspiring root,
and what curious flower or fruit
will grow from that conspiring root?

Fruit or flower? It is a face.
Yes, a face.
In that dark and dreary place
each seed grows into a face.

Like an army in a dream
the faces seem,
darker, darker, like a dream.
They're too real to be a dream.

ELIZABETH BISHOP

AN OFFICERS' PRISON CAMP SEEN FROM A TROOP TRAIN

It is some school, brick, green, a sleepy hill,
That blazes from the train's turn in its wire.
Nightly the guns are set, the cold guards yawn,
The lights burn for the sleepless prisoner
Who works like a gopher through the dirt of time
To climb this midnight back to his own war.

At first he waited: read, slept, or heard the lies
They told him always — the interminable defeats —
Till he began to see — next year, next year —

What he remembered from his childhood, Peace:
The marks papering a wall, the hungry weeping,
The machine-guns pulsing in the workers' streets.

Numb, filthy, shivering, he sees again
The stars dim behind the eternal lights of man
And sobs. It is, as it has been, the joy of men
To escape from another's evil to their own.
Here, so like, so different, is all that you had planned.
Think, as you tremble in the new world's air,

That more than seas, than continents, the years
Lie absolute between you and those wars
You wished, worked out, and thought at last were yours.
Here, here around you are your colonies;
Here in the midnight of the alien wilderness
The mastering races forge their destiny and yours.

Teach me the meaning of my world too well
For you or it to be endurable to me;
Last, till the states, the years, end here with you
To cough their blood out on the neutral earth.
Die, soldier, while the guns learn everything
From your thin body pinned against the light.

PRISONERS

Within the wires of the post, unloading the cans of garbage,
The three in soiled blue denim (the white ball on their backs
Sending its chilly *North* six yards to the turning blackened
Sights of the cradled rifle, to the eyes of the yawning guard)
Go on all day being punished, go on all month, all year
Loading, unloading; give their child's, beast's sigh — of despair,
Of endurance and of existence; look unexpectedly
At the big guard, dark in his khaki, at the dust of the blazing plain,
At the running or crawling soldiers in their soiled and shapeless green.
The prisoners, the guard, the soldiers — they are all, in their way,
being trained.
From these moments, repeated forever, our own new world will be
made.

THE METAMORPHOSES

Where I spat in the harbor the oranges were bobbing
All salted and sodden, with eyes in their rinds;
The sky was all black where the coffee was burning,
And the rust of the freighters had reddened the tide.

But soon all the chimneys were hidden with contracts,
The tankers rode low in the oil-black bay,
The wharves were a maze of the crated bombers,
And they gave me a job and I worked all day.

And the orders are filled; but I float in the harbor,
All tarry and swollen, with gills in my sides,
The sky is all black where the carrier's burning,
And the blood of the transports is red on the tide.

MOTHER, SAID THE CHILD

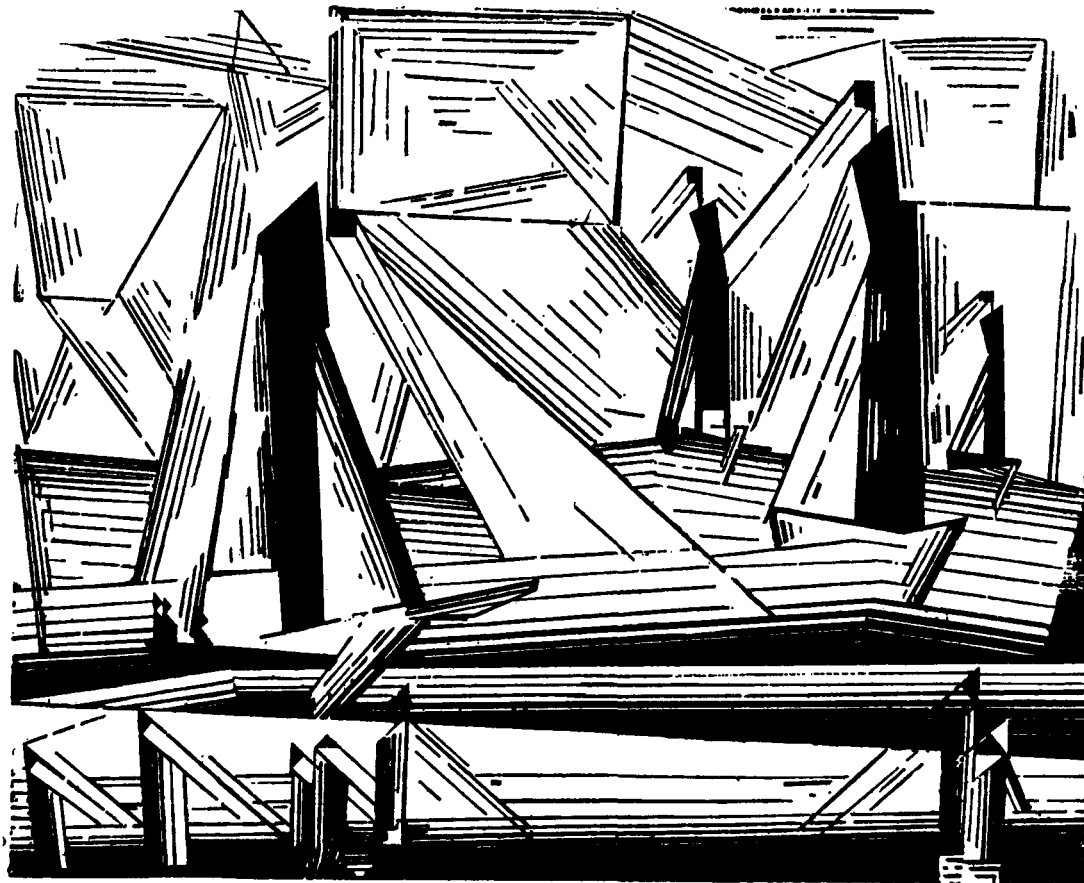
*Mother, said the child, the boughs all talk
All night, they say that all of us —*
No, no, she answered; who has heard them speak?
They stand there silently . . . Or perhaps walk

*Up through the grasses, said the child, and stare
At me there sleeping; and the leaves all stir —*
The wind, she answered; when have the leaves waked?
Sleep on, my life . . . Tonight your murderers

*Have found me, said the child; one calls, Come back!
But I wake here in moonlight, pale and old —*
No, no, she answered; how could that be so?
You lie home sleeping . . . And your cheeks are black

*With blood, said the child; he flung back his white head
And cried, Come warm me with your crazy limbs —*
And the mother laughed, and opened her cold arms
And pressed to his dead mouth the blood of the dead.

RANDALL JARRELL



LYONEL FEININGER: Sail Boats. Woodcut

(Reproduction Contributed by Nierendorf Gallery, New York City)

The Ghost of Henry James*

SAUL ROSENZWEIG

AMONG THE TALES of Henry James is a supernatural series composed during the final third of his life and peopled by ghosts of a character utterly Jamesian. It is the peculiarity of these wraiths which merits special attention at this centenary of the author's birth; for, unlike the ordinary creatures of their kind, they fail to represent the remnants of once-lived lives but point instead to the irrepressible un-lived life. To consider these ghosts in their significance for him is a fitting expression of interest in James's immortality.

Weirdly enough, these apparitions lead back to their point of origin in James's first published tale, "The Story of a Year," which appeared in the pages of the *Atlantic Monthly* for March, 1865. Here at the very outset was announced that "death" which spoke more elusively in his earlier writings, and more explicitly provided toward the end the basis for his literary specters. It was, in short, the story of his own life—written prophetically, and published at the early age of twenty-two; complemented in too perfect a fashion for other interpretation by the tales of his later years; and clarified autobiographically in the last full book he lived to complete. Singularly this tale has never been reprinted, though, as every reader of James is aware, most of his other short stories have appeared in collected form once at least; many of them more than once.

The story may be more significantly reviewed after some facts of James's early life have been recalled. The second child of Henry James, the theological and semiphilosophical writer (William James, the famous psychologist, having been by but a little over a year the first), Henry James, the novelist, spent his earliest days in a household richly gifted with intellectual fare and gracious cheer. The father (cf. 17) was a strongly individual student of cosmic problems which for a period brought him into close association with the transcendentalist group of Concord and Boston. Emerson was a close friend, as were also many other literary and scholarly figures of the time. His

* This psychoanalytic study of Henry James, reprinted here by courtesy of the Duke University Press, originally appeared in the December 1943 issue of *Character and Personality*.

books dealt with religious questions, such as the nature of evil, and with social problems, like those of marriage and divorce, in which the relation of the individual to society occupied a central place. His views were distinctly unconventional. Though he was at various times an enthusiastic student of Fourier and Swedenborg, he was never a mere disciple—the individualistic stamp was too strong on all he thought and wrote. Indeed, this markedly idiosyncratic bias made his books, despite their vivid language and command of style, accessible to a very limited audience. The majority tended to be of a mind with the reviewer who said of “The Secret of Swedenborg” that the elder James had not only written about the secret of Swedenborg but that he had kept it. One is inevitably reminded of the similar quips with which the works of his son and namesake were later received; for example, the comment in *Life* expressing the hope that Henry James would sharpen his point of view and then stick himself with it, and Mark Twain’s avowal that he would rather be damned to John Bunyan’s heaven than have to read *The Bostonians*.

The early life of the elder James is not without interest in the present context, especially as concerns an accident which befell him at the age of thirteen and which left its mark upon him for the rest of his life. While a schoolboy at the Albany Academy, he formed one of a group who used to meet in a near-by park for experiments in balloon flying. The motive power for the balloon was furnished by a ball of tow soaked in turpentine. The ball would drop when the balloon caught fire, and the boys would then kick the ball around for their amusement. During one of these experiments, when Henry’s pantaloons had by chance got sprinkled with turpentine, one of the balls came flying through the open window of a stable. The boy in an attempt to put out the fire, which would otherwise have consumed the building, rushed to the hayloft and stamped out the flame. In doing so he burnt his leg severely and had to remain in bed for the next two years. A double amputation above the knee proved necessary. He had a wooden leg in later years and was prevented by his infirmity from leading a very active life. Fortunately he had inherited sufficient money from his father—an influential and wealthy citizen of Albany—to obviate any routine means of earning a livelihood. Accordingly, the children of Henry James were much more closely companioned by him than would otherwise have been possible, and it is thus easier to understand that the strength of character which he had should have left so strong an impression upon their young personalities. In the *Notes of a Son and Brother* (p. 192), the

son Henry refers to his father's handicap and couples the latter's acceptance of it with a further resignation to the lack of worldly recognition the message of his books received. The similarity to the son's own fate is again noteworthy, not merely for their both having been neglected by the general public—a circumstance already mentioned—but for their common lot of infirmity.

The particular infirmity of the son must at the very outset be recognized as having established itself upon fertile soil. Henry was apparently always unsure of himself. As a boy his incapacity for athletics and for schoolwork equally stood out in his impressions although he occupied the place of favorite in his mother's affections. He was especially aware of a certain inferiority to his older and more energetic brother William—he has said as much—and William has in counterpart written in one of his letters (cf. 16, Vol. I, p. 288) about “innocent and at bottom very powerless-feeling Harry.” But the accident which offered this general orientation a specific date and place for its disclosure is still inescapably important.

No better description of it could possibly be given than that which the victim has himself provided. He is speaking in *Notes of a Son and Brother* of his year at the Harvard Law School, and of the inception of his literary career. He continues (pp. 296 ff.):

Two things and more had come up—the biggest of which, and very wondrous as bearing on any circumstance of mine, as having a grain of weight to spare for it, was the breaking out of the [Civil] War. The other, the infinitely small affair in comparison, was a passage of personal history the most entirely personal, but between which, as a private catastrophe or difficulty, bristling with embarrassments, and the great public convulsion that announced itself in bigger terms each day, I felt from the very first an association of the closest, yet withal, I fear, almost of the least clearly expressible. Scarce at all to be stated, to begin with, the queer fusion or confusion established in my consciousness during the soft spring of '61 by the firing on Fort Sumter, Mr. Lincoln's instant first call for volunteers and a physical mishap, already referred to as having overtaken me at the same dark hour, and the effects of which were to draw themselves out incalculably and intolerably. Beyond all present notation the interlaced, undivided way in which what had happened to me, by a turn of fortune's hand, in twenty odious minutes, kept company of the most unnatural—I can call it nothing less—with my view of what was happening, with the question of what might still happen, to everyone about me, to the country at large: it so made of these marked disparities a single vast visitation. One had the sense, I mean, of a huge comprehensive ache, and there were hours at which one could scarce have told whether it came from one's own poor organism, still so young and so meant for better things, but which had suffered particular wrong,

or from the enclosing social body, a body rent with a thousand wounds and that thus treated one to the honour of a sort of tragic fellowship. The twenty minutes had sufficed, at all events, to establish a relation—a relation to everything occurring round me not only for the next four years but for long afterward—that was at once extraordinarily intimate and quite awkwardly irrelevant. I must have felt in some befooled way in presence of a crisis—the smoke of Charleston Bay still so acrid in the air—at which the likely young should be up and doing or, as familiarly put, lend a hand much wanted; the willing youths, all round, were mostly starting to their feet, and to have trumped up a lameness at such a juncture could be made to pass in no light for graceful. Jammed into the acute angle between two high fences, where the rhythmic play of my arms, in tune with that of several other pairs, but at a dire disadvantage of position, induced a rural, a rusty, a quasi-extemporised old engine to work and a saving stream to flow, I had done myself, in face of a shabby conflagration, a horrid even if an obscure hurt; and what was interesting from the first was my not doubting in the least its duration—though what seemed equally clear was that I needn't as a matter of course adopt and appropriate it, so to speak, or place it for increase of interest on exhibition. The interest of it, I very presently knew, would certainly be of the greatest, would even in conditions kept as simple as I might make them become little less than absorbing. The shortest account of what was to follow for a long time after is therefore to plead that the interest never did fail. It was naturally what is called a painful one, but it consistently declined, as an influence at play, to drop for a single instant. Circumstances, by a wonderful chance, overwhelmingly favoured it—as an interest, an inexhaustible, I mean; since I also felt in the whole enveloping tonic atmosphere a force promoting its growth. Interest, the interest of life and of death, of our national existence, of the fate of those, the vastly numerous, whom it closely concerned, the interest of the extending War, in fine, the hurrying troops, the transfigured scene, formed a cover for every sort of intensity, made tension itself in fact contagious—so that almost any tension would do, would serve for one's share.

Two points stand out in these stirring words: first, James did not doubt from the beginning that his hurt would involve much and last long; and, second, he could not view it as a merely personal experience but found it indissolubly united with the war which was at that moment engulfing the entire nation. The former consideration shows clearly that somewhere in his personality the seed had been sown for what had now transpired, despite the appearance of mere accident, just as in his later tale, "The Beast in the Jungle," the hero knew without any statable basis that he would one day suffer some extremity of disaster from which his life would acquire its significance. It may be conjectured from what has already been said regarding the accidental crippling of the father at the age of thirteen that the dire

experience of the son at eighteen was in some sense a repetition—that by one of those devious paths of identification which creates strange needs in sensitive personalities, Henry James, the son, while likewise engaged in extinguishing a fire may, if only for a moment, have suffered a lapse of attention or alertness, due possibly to some glimmering association about his father's accident on a so similar occasion; and that thus favored, the accident took effect.¹ It seems not unlikely that But the physical aspect which has on occasion been stressed is of purely where as a sprain—would not have been sustained. Such a psychological moment can surely not be underestimated by any sympathetic reader of James since he himself made of just such minutiae the essence of his art. How much the proximity of the rhythmically moving men may have contributed to the mental association with the father and the “lapse” must remain like the lapse itself a matter of conjecture. But the presumed relationship to the father's accident seems to explain the son's avowed receptivity for the event and his certainty as to its consequences.

These considerations also shed some light upon the nature of the injury, especially in its psychological significance. James himself describes it as “the most entirely personal” and as “a horrid even if an obscure hurt.” It is known also that it in some way affected his back. But the physical aspect which has on occasion been stressed is of purely secondary importance. Paramount is the subjective depth of the injury as James experienced it. Occurring at the very outbreak of the war, the event may well have caused him to suspect himself as an unconscious malingerer. A complex of guilt could thus have remained. Coming as it did at a time when *men* were needed by the country and were, like his own brothers Wilky and Robertson, answering the call, the injury even more surely constituted a proof of his powerlessness and crystallized a sense of impotence from which he never fully recovered. The avoidance of passion and the overqualification in his later writings are largely traceable to such an implicit attitude of combined guilt and inferiority; as are also some of his subsequent actions including, as will be pointed out presently, his participation in World War I.

¹ The coincidence between the accidents of Henry James, Sr., and his son Henry is amazingly paralleled by a similar duplication of experience between the father and the son William. In this latter case a psychological catastrophe rather than a physical injury is involved, but the powerful relationship between father and son is again inescapable. For a description of the experiences, compare William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, New York, 1902, pp. 160-161, with the footnote reference to the work of Henry James, Sr. (*Society: the redeemed form of man*, Boston, 1879, pp. 43 ff.), where the father's case of equally sudden terror is recounted.

In such a context is understandable also his consternation after having revealed his problem at finding it "treated but to a comparative pooh-pooh—an impression I long looked back to as a sharp parting of the ways, with an adoption of the wrong one distinctly determined" (7, p. 330). The great surgeon to whom his father conducted him for consultation in Boston might at least have offered some warning of what was in store. Obviously, the surgeon, with a not uncommon lack of interest in psychological implications, did not even begin to fathom the depths to which the experience of his patient reached, and the patient, feeling much from these depths, was the more appalled at the medical advice he received. Corresponding to this negative aspect is a positive one—the orientation which James tells of adopting toward his injury in trying to come to terms with it. In the late summer of 1861 he visited a camp of invalid and convalescent troops in Rhode Island. He had here his "first and all but sole vision of the American soldier in his multitude, and above all—for that was markedly the colour of the whole thing—in his depression, his wasted melancholy almost; an effect that somehow corresponds for memory, I bethink myself, with the tender elegiac tone in which Walt Whitman was later on so admirably to commemorate him" (7, pp. 310 f.). James tells of talking with the soldiers and comforting them as he could, not only with words but by "such pecuniary solace as I might at brief notice draw on my poor pocket for. Yet again, as I indulge this memory, do I feel that I might if pushed a little rejoice in having to such an extent coincided with, not to say perhaps positively anticipated, dear old Walt—even if I hadn't come armed like him with oranges and peppermints. I ministered much more summarily, though possibly in proportion to the time and thanks to my better luck more pecuniarily; but I like to treat myself to making out that I can scarce have brought to the occasion (in proportion to the time again and to other elements of the case) less of the consecrating sentiment than he" (7, pp. 314 f.). As he sailed back to Newport that night feeling considerably the worse for his exertion in his "impaired state," there established itself in his mind, "measuring wounds against wounds," a correspondence between himself and the soldiers "less exaltedly than wastefully engaged in the common fact of endurance" (7, p. 318).

Another heartening aspect presented itself at the Harvard Law School, which he at this time attended for some months, where the "bristling horde of . . . comrades fairly produced the illusion of a mustered army. The Cambridge campus was tented field enough for a conscript starting so compromised; and I can scarce say moreover how

easily it let me down that when it came to the point one had still fine fierce young men, in great numbers, for company, there being at the worst so many such who hadn't flown to arms" (7, pp. 301-302).

His new orientation entailed a constructive step forward. In the months which followed, James turned to the art of fiction. His first published tale was, as has already been mentioned, "The Story of a Year." Needless to say, the story should be read in its original form to be fully appreciated. Unfortunately it is not easy of access since it was never reprinted, but a synopsis, however lacking artistically, may convey certain essentials of the plot which are needed here.

John Ford has a second lieutenancy in the Northern Army and is about to leave for the war. On a long walk just before his departure he proposes marriage to the ward of his widowed mother. The girl is named Elizabeth, or Lizzie, Crowe. She is a simple, pretty creature who is overjoyed at the prospect of marriage, but he exacts from her the promise that if anything should happen to him in the war, she will forget him and accept the love of another. He also cautions that, to avoid gossip, it may be better to keep the engagement a secret, but he does not bind her on this point. On getting home the girl goes to her room, while he tells his mother of the engagement. Mrs. Ford is definitely against the match because she thinks Elizabeth shallow and not good enough for him. (The author suggests that, having been a good mother, Mrs. Ford would have liked for her son to choose a woman on her own model.) He refuses to accept his mother's judgment about the girl, but tries to avoid contention on his last night at home. He asks his mother not to discuss the matter with Elizabeth.

After he is gone the two women say nothing about the engagement to each other at any time, but the mother has her secret plans. When Elizabeth's first blush of excitement is over, she is sent by Mrs. Ford on a visit to a friend in another city and there, decked out in finery of her guardian's making, she soon wins another suitor—Bruce. When she leaves for home, he comes to the train to see her off and accidentally shows her the newspaper which contains the announcement of Ford's having been severely wounded. Elizabeth is in great conflict and now avoids Bruce, who would accompany her to the next station. When Elizabeth reaches home, Mrs. Ford states her intention of going to nurse her son—the very thing the girl had planned to do herself; but Lizzie is strangely relieved by this shift of responsibility. She stays at home, while Mrs. Ford goes off.

Elizabeth now dreams one night that she is walking with a tall dark man who calls her wife. In the shadow of a tree they find an

unburied male corpse covered with wounds. Elizabeth proposes that a grave be dug, but as they lift the corpse it suddenly opens its eyes and says "Amen." She and her companion place it in the grave and stamp the earth down with their feet.

Various changes occur—Ford gets better, gets worse, etc., and at one point when it seems he is dying, Elizabeth accepts Bruce, who is visiting in the town at the time. But Ford unexpectedly has a turn for the better and is brought home to be nursed. His mother manages to keep Elizabeth away from him for some time. When first rejected at his door, Lizzie wraps a blanket around herself and goes out on the steps. Bruce comes by, but she will not talk with him and leaves him standing there stupefied. The next day she manages to get into Jack's room, and he appears to recognize her. When Mrs. Ford learns of this visit, she is very angry, but Jack asks for Elizabeth to come again. This time he explains to her that he knows he is going to die. He is, however, glad that she has found someone else and blesses them both. He asks Elizabeth to be kind to his mother. He dies. The next day Elizabeth encounters Bruce, but she is willing only to say farewell. She says she must do justice to her old love. She forbids Bruce to follow her. "But for all that he went in" (12, p. 281).

The story has today a timely interest of a general sort since it embodies a type of problem confronting many young men and women in the confused contemporary world. But it obviously goes deeper by bringing home the manner in which events on a national, or even international, scale may have a peculiarly personal significance for the individual which is timeless in character. Thus James says (12, pp. 263 f.): "I have no intention of following Lieutenant Ford to the seat of war. The exploits of his campaign are recorded in the public journals of the day, where the curious may still peruse them. My own taste has always been for unwritten history, and my present business is with the reverse of the picture."

As a first step in interpretation must be noted the facts that the hero foresees his own death, is wounded, and dies. In foreseeing his death, he makes his sweetheart promise that she will forget him and choose another if need be. The mother opposes the match, and the girl in the case is represented as abandoning the hero well before his own physical wounds have doomed him. It is hardly possible to escape the conclusion that those wounds were not meant to be fatal without the contribution of the unhappy love motif. The wounds of the hero are, in other words, not those of a patriot who dies of what befalls him in military combat. They are those of a lover forsaken by his psychologi-

cal fate. The personal significance of the war as opposed to its national or external one is emphasized. The war serves merely as a screen upon which the deeply private problem can be projected.

At this point one comes readily to see that this tale of the Civil War and the author's description of his civilian injury at the time of its outbreak are closely related. The correspondence which had established itself in his mind between the wounded soldiers in Rhode Island and his own impaired state is expressed imaginatively in this first story. But the author's view takes precedence over the soldier's even in the fiction, since it is the implication of the wounds for love rather than for war that is stressed. The death of the hero in "The Story of a Year" is thus a representation of James's own passional death as implied in the *Notes of a Son and Brother*.

The dream of Elizabeth is one of the high lights of the tale and clearly illustrates James's early mastery of certain psychological processes which have been more formally described by professional psychologists only recently. Not only is the dream prophetic—that would be banal—but it portrays in clear images the conflict in the dreamer's mind and the inevitable solution she will adopt in keeping with her deepest wishes. Such a reading of the dream indicates unmistakably that the hero's fate was sealed not by the wounds he sustained in battle, but by the psychological forces in the situation. Among such forces were not only the faithlessness of the girl but also the opposition of the mother and the hero's own self-doubt. The banter with which his early conversation with the girl is embellished—the references to the possibility of the hero's looking like a woman instead of a man after he returns with his wounds—is of considerable interest as indicating the presence of certain feminine elements in his personality to which his self-doubt and the anticipated injury may bear some relationship.

Certain details of the story might with further knowledge of James's own life lend themselves to a fuller interpretation. Thus, for instance, the possessive character of the mother in relation to the son; the heroine's being a ward of the mother—a "cousin" of the hero; and the personality of the successful rival Bruce—all raise interesting problems regarding possible intimates in James's environment. Perhaps even more significant is the absence of a father—the widowed state of Mrs. Ford. If Henry James's own father is here in question, the filial relationship may have been sensed as "too sacred" for exposure. The depth of identification between father and son in terms of their common infirmity, already discussed, agrees with such a view.

This construction is, moreover, borne out by the fiction itself if the father's death existing as a given fact when the story opens is taken as corresponding to the death of the son at its close. The identity of their fates may be regarded as symbolizing their psychological identification. Paramount, however, is the other equivalence of Henry James's blight and John Ford's death. For from this "death" came the ghost which was to appear again and again in the later tales.

Before turning to the subject of this specter, attention must be paid to some intermediate stages of development. As if to materialize the "death," James actually left America to take up residence in England in 1875. The fantasy had for a time been adequate as a form of adjustment, but in the end it yielded as a forecast to the actual physical withdrawal. For this often discussed self-exile seems to have represented an escape from a world disagreeable before and now no longer tolerable. Most of James's tales and novels were written while he was living abroad, and a great number of them, from *A Passionate Pilgrim* (1871) to *The Ambassadors* (1903), present the problems of the expatriate and the allied contrast between Old and New Worlds. He returned twice to his native land in the early eighties. His mother died during the first visit, and his father's sudden and final illness brought him back almost immediately. He then remained away again for over twenty years. After a decade, however,—in the early nineties—he began writing a series of supernatural tales to which allusion has already been made. "Sir Edmund Orme" (11), which was copyrighted in 1891 and appears to have been the first, concerns the fate of a lover who as a prerequisite to his marriage must rid himself of a ghost that represents an early jilted suitor of his prospective mother-in-law. The uncanny relationship between the older woman and young man, with the apparition of an unloved youth as intermediary, unmistakably revives the situation in "The Story of a Year." There, it will be recalled, the subordination of John Ford to his mother's judgment eventually coincided with his own presentiment of death and made together for what could on the surface well be taken for a jilting by his sweetheart. The supernatural tale, however, records the triumph of the hero over the ghost and thus sounds the keynote of James's new orientation. The same restorative tendency is even more obviously at work in "Owen Wingrave" (9), which appeared in 1893. Owen has been preparing for a military career—the traditional profession of his family—when at the eleventh hour he decides to brave every misunderstanding, even that of cowardice, and keep faith with his deepest convictions by giving up his plans. In the

stormy days that follow he accepts the challenge of the girl who, somewhat like Elizabeth Crowe in the case of John Ford, had been his childhood playmate and a dependent of his family. To prove his courage, he allows her to lock him for the night in a haunted chamber where his great-great-grandfather had mysteriously died after having accidentally caused the death of his own young son by an angry blow. Like his ancestor, Owen *wins* his *grave* in that room. "He looked like a young soldier on a battle field" (9, p. 220). In this instance the relationship of the hero to the paternal figure, rather than the maternal one—as in "Sir Edmund Orme"—is portrayed and, similarly, the emphasis is laid upon aggression (or war) rather than upon love. The other aspect of John Ford's problem seems thus to be bared—the role of the father figure as an inhibitor of aggression. The integrity of the hero is in the end established even if, like his sire before him, he has to yield his life to the ghost of an accidental violence. As a presentation of James's personal problem at the outbreak of the Civil War, including even the relation of his injury to that of his father, this tale is once more clearly autobiographical. As in "Sir Edmund Orme," the vindicating theme is again dominant. For the ghosts which haunted their author from the undying past (as a return of the repressed) could only be exorcised by the achievement of some solution.

After a series of such tales had for over ten years proclaimed his deep preoccupation with the past, James began to plan eagerly for an American visit of six or eight months. His supernatural fantasies had foretold this revisit even as "The Story of a Year" had previously forecast the departure for Europe. The counterpart to the defensive escape was to be a compulsive return. The need he felt was strong. His brother William tried to dissuade him, in order doubtless to spare him the pain which the exposure would inflict upon his sensitive nature. But Henry insisted that he actually needed "shocks." How he experienced these in 1904-1905 is vividly recorded in *The American Scene* (2), which he wrote on his return to England.

The itinerary of his American trip as reflected in the chapters of this book is in itself instructive. The "repatriated absentee" or "restless analyst," as he variously styles himself, went first to New England. He then saw New York, Newport, Boston, Concord, and Salem; Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and the South—Richmond, Charleston, and Florida. He traveled also to the Far West, but his book concludes with Florida. The sequel he planned was never writ-

ten, and it strikes one that, with the South accounted for, the rest was to him merely appendix.

At any rate, his visits to Richmond and Charleston—where he had never been before—stand out as especially significant. He says, in speaking of his “going South,” that it somehow corresponded now to what in ancient days the yearning for Europe seemed romantically to promise. Early in the chapter on Richmond he alludes to the outbreak of the Civil War and describes the city almost purely in terms of its having been the Confederate capital. He characterizes it (2, p. 358, *passim*) as “the haunted scene” and “the tragic ghost-haunted city,” full of an “adorable weakness” that evokes a certain “tenderness” in the visitor. The gist of his impression he gives in an image: “I can doubtless not sufficiently tell why, but there was something in my whole sense of the South that projected at moments a vivid and painful image—that of a figure somehow blighted or stricken, discomfortably, impossibly seated in an invalid-chair, and yet fixing one with strange eyes that were half a defiance and half a deprecation of one’s noticing, and much more of one’s referring to, an abnormal sign” (2, p. 362). A strong suspicion arises that the image here projected is that of James himself in 1861. For confirmation one need only recall his own description of the manner in which his youthful injury had united itself indissolubly in his mind with the Civil War. As his own inner turmoil had corresponded then to the internal conflict of the country, so now his highly sympathetic and tender response to the vanquished faction seems builded on an understanding of his quite similar fate.

This view is borne out by his impressions of Charleston. Here, again, the war of North and South dominates his field of vision, but, unlike the Northern friend who accompanied him, he finds himself concentrating on the “bled” condition and his heart fails to harden even against the treachery at Fort Sumter. Once more a synoptic image emerges, this time of feminization: “The feminization is there just to promote for us some eloquent antithesis; just to make us say that whereas the ancient order was masculine, fierce and moustachioed, the present is at the most a sort of sick lioness who has so visibly parted with her teeth and claws that we may patronizingly walk all round her. . . . This image really gives us the best word for the general effect of Charleston. . . .” (2, pp. 401 f.). One recalls almost with a start the bantering conversation in “The Story of a Year” of forty years earlier between the hero and the heroine as to the possibility of his looking like a “lady” when he returns from the war with his

wounds. John Ford carries on the figure by saying that even if he grows a moustache, as he intends to do, he will be altering his face as women do a misfitting garment—taking in on one side and letting out on the other—insofar as he crops his head and cultivates his chin.

In general, then, the impression seems sustained that Henry James's visit to America in 1904-1905, after twenty years of absence, was largely actuated by an impulse to repair, if possible, the injury and to complete the unfinished experience of his youth. He was, as it were, haunted by the ghost of his own past and of this he wished to disabuse his mind before actual death overtook him. Since the Civil War had played so vital a part in his early blight, he now visited the South for the first time and received there those impressions which bear so strong a mark of personal projection.

The plausibility of this reconstruction and of the preceding interpretation of "The Story of a Year" is strengthened by a psychological reading of the later supernatural tales, especially "The Jolly Corner" (5). This short story was first published in the *English Review* for December, 1908, shortly after his visit to the United States. It is the story of Spencer Brydon who as a man of fifty-six returns to America after many years of residence in Europe. He has come to look at his property—the house on the Jolly Corner—where he was born and grew up. Before long he becomes absorbed in the old house to the point of visiting it nightly in the strange hope of encountering there his own alter ego—the ghost of his former self. When he finally does succeed and is confronted by the specter he has been seeking, he notes among other things that two fingers on its right hand are missing. He cannot endure to face the image before him—he refuses to recognize himself there—and overwhelmed by the extremity of his emotion, he falls unconscious. When he revives, Alice Staverton, whom he had known in his early days before taking up residence abroad and whom he has been seeing since his return, is standing over him. She, too, has seen the ghost—in a dream—and thus knew that Spencer had made the encounter. He protests to her that the shape he has met was not himself till she quite simply declares, "Isn't the whole point that you'd have been different?" (5, p. 483.) It is clear from the context that the heroine could have been in love with the rejected personality (the ghost) since she understood it. She is, however, equally ready to accept Brydon as he is today and reconcile him, perhaps, to those unacknowledged aspects of himself which have kept him from her all these years—which have driven him abroad to escape himself.

The specter in this tale is typical of Henry James. Unlike the ghosts of other writers, the creatures of James's imagination represent not the shadows of lives once lived, but the immortal impulses of the unlived life. In the present story the ghost of Spencer Brydon is obviously his rejected self. Moreover, an injury—the two lost fingers—here stands in some relation to the fact that the life was not lived or that, in other words, a kind of psychological death had occurred. Finally, the injury and the related incompleteness have entailed an unfulfilled love. The hero has fled the heroine because he could not face himself.

At this point one is obviously but a step from "The Story of a Year," written forty years earlier than "The Jolly Corner." To repeat what has more than once been implied: with the death of John Ford the ghost of Spencer Brydon came into existence. The story of the latter is a complement to that of the former. As Henry James—or Ford—left America to reside abroad, Brydon returns to confront his former self. The identity of the characters is established by the injuries each suffered—James's "obscure hurt," Ford's wounds, and Brydon's missing fingers. But like James during his visit in 1904-1905, Brydon is obviously attempting to rectify the past—to face it again and test the answer previously given. There is thus represented here not merely a harking back with vain regrets but an obvious effort to overcome old barriers and pass beyond them. It is in this spirit that the woman in the case, Alice Staverton, now likewise appears as a complement to Elizabeth Crowe. Whereas Elizabeth had been faithless, Alice is ever faithful and still ready to accept her lover both as he was and as he is. Even the device of the dream recurs—the dream of Elizabeth having presaged her abandonment of Ford, while that of Alice brings her through her empathy to the scene of Brydon's overwhelming encounter with his ghost.

The complementary relationship of these two tales, standing at the very beginning and all but the end of James's creative work, is so striking that one is impelled to believe that the second was intentionally written as a counterpart to the first. This conjecture is supported by chronological considerations. When James toured America in 1904-1905, memories of the Civil War were vividly revived for him, as has already been mentioned. "The Story of a Year" must surely have been recalled at that time in sharp relief. But one of the more practical reasons for the journey was to arrange for the publication of the definitive New York Edition (8) of his collected fiction. After completing *The American Scene* on his return to England, he spent the next two years in rereading, selecting, and meticulously revising

his novels and tales. Critics have assailed the rigorous censorship to which the earlier writings were subjected in this process, but James's action is understandable if one compares the revision and the revisit as attempts equally to reclaim the past and reshape it while there was yet time. In the careful review of all his past work which the preparation of the collected edition entailed, James must again have come upon "The Story of a Year"—this time paginally. But he did not include this tale. What one does find there—psychologically instead—is a new story, "The Jolly Corner," which was first published in 1908 and was probably written during the arduous process of the collective revision. This tale was plainly based on the American visit, yet it no doubt also represented a retelling of the omitted "The Story of a Year"—the most radical revision of them all. For in "The Jolly Corner" one finds a coalescence of revisit and revision which satisfactorily explains the complementary relationship of this story to the first ever written. Through marking the persistence of the trend one comes to see that, despite the wishful reworking, "The Story of a Year" was nevertheless the story of a life.

Towards the end of 1909 and for nearly a year thereafter, James suffered from a severe nervous depression which completely incapacitated him for work. This illness must in the foregoing context be taken as a reaction to the failure of his restitutive efforts. Neither the supernatural tales nor the American return nor the definitive revision of his works had achieved the solution he desperately sought, and despair overtook him. His brother William's death toward the end of 1910 removed a mainstay of his life and deepened his misery. Further illness in 1912 made the end seem tragically near.

But through everything he held on, actuated still by the same forward impetus that had unfailingly declared itself before. He was unwittingly preparing for the final and highest adventure of his life. For with the outbreak of World War I in 1914, this reticent man of seventy-one, until now without any obvious interest in political affairs, of a sudden identified himself with *social action*. He recognized the cost that might be involved when he compared himself to the quiet dweller in a tenement upon whom the question of "structural improvements" is thrust and he feared for his "house of the spirit" where everything had become for better or worse adjusted to his familiar habits and use. But this "vulgar apprehension" could not deter him; and, as he says, "I found myself before long building on additions and upper stories, throwing out extensions and protrusions, indulging even, all recklessly, in gables and pinnacles and battlements—things

that had presently transformed the unpretending place into I scarce know what to call it, a fortress of the faith, a palace of the soul, an extravagant, bristling, flag-flying structure which had quite as much to do with the air as with the earth" (13, pp. 19 f.).

His efforts for the Allied cause knew no bounds. He visited army hospitals and refugee encampments (as he had on a certain earlier occasion visited a military camp of invalids in Rhode Island); made pecuniary contributions and wrote articles for war charities; supported movements like the American Volunteer Ambulance Corps; and performed a host of lesser tasks as a daily routine from the beginning of the war until his death. His friends were amazed—even as they were inspired—by the fervor of this notoriously passionless writer. As Percy Lubbock, the editor of James's *Letters*, well says: "To all who listened to him in those days it must have seemed that he gave us what we lacked—a voice; there was a trumpet note in it that was heard nowhere else and that alone rose to the height of the truth. For a while it was as though the burden of age had slipped from him; he lived in the lives of all who were acting and suffering—especially of the young, who acted and suffered most. His spiritual vigour bore a strain that was the greater by the whole weight of his towering imagination; but the time came at last when his bodily endurance failed. He died resolutely confident of the victory that was still so far off" (6, Vol. II, p. 379). Edmund Gosse, among others, expressed the opinion (14) that James's death early in 1916 was definitely hastened by his profligate expenditure of energy in war service.

In these days when the centenary of Henry James's birth coincides with World War II, the significance of his death during World War I well lends itself to further examination. Without detracting in the least from the positive significance of the contribution, one may still trace the line of its descent from the earlier record already revealed. Is it too much to suggest that the unparalleled fervor of his actions is to some extent explained by a belated compensation for his failure at the time of the Civil War? In favor of such a view is the fact that the last book he lived to complete—*Notes of a Son and Brother*—and the one in which he recounted the memories of his youth, including his injury, was published in 1914. His early experiences were thus unusually fresh in his mind at the outbreak of the war. But to this inference may be added his own testimony as found in the opening sentences of the little volume, *Within the Rim* (13), in which are collected his war time essays: "The first sense of it all to me after the first shock and horror was that of a sudden leap back into life of the

violence with which the American Civil War broke upon us, at the North, fifty-four years ago, when I had a consciousness of youth which perhaps equalled in vivacity my present consciousness of age. . . . The analogy quickened and deepened with every elapsing hour; the drop of the balance under the invasion of Belgium reproduced with intensity the agitation of the New England air by Mr. Lincoln's call to arms, and I went about for a short space as with the queer secret locked in my breast of at least already knowing how such occasions helped and what a big war was going to mean" (13, pp. 11 f.). The analogy of the wars in his own consciousness thus attested, it is not difficult to believe that a common motivational tie was at least implicitly at work. He might have been found wanting in 1861, but he would not be found so on this second and doubtless final occasion. At that earlier time he had adjusted to his personal wounds by withdrawal and by such constructive acts as the art of fiction permitted. But now a positive participation in real social action would provide the solution for the problem which had haunted him through life. Instead of hanging his head as a war disability, he would stand forth as a war hero; England, which had been for him a refuge of escape, would become a citadel of his true assertion; and America, which had exhibited him as weak, would now be exhibited by him as weak.

In this setting becomes intelligible the mooted question of James's assumption of British citizenship a few months before his death. He had, on the one hand, been adding to his numerous activities in the Allied interest repeated statements of his consternation that America did not enter the war at once. On the other hand, his fervent identification with the English cause increased daily. Thus in July, 1915, he at last became a naturalized British subject. By this stroke he changed for himself the orientation of a lifetime. His haven of refuge was transformed into the many-flagged and turreted embattlements of which he well might write with a surge of liberated passion. From these heights he could in the end look down upon America hanging back in the distance. His own words—in a letter to his nephew—again at this point offer direct confirmation: "I have testified to my long attachment here in the only way I could—though I certainly shouldn't have done it, under the inspiration of our Cause, if the U. S. A. had done it a little more *for* me. Then I should have thrown myself back on that and been content with it; but as this, at the end of a year, hasn't taken place, I have had to act for myself, and I go so far as quite to think, I hope not fatuously, that I shall have set an example and shown a little something of the way" (6, Vol. II, p. 491).

It seems not improbable that this excessive expenditure of energy in a man over seventy brought on a death premature by some months or even years. But he must surely have felt that the reward had been worth the cost. And regarding these final events in the terms not of what they may have been surmounting in his past, but, as from the vantage point of the present, they appear progressively to mean, one can respond in full accord; since James by the active assertion of that period re-established vital contact with contemporary social realities.

So at last the pattern of the genius which was Henry James emerges. Suffering from childhood with a keen sense of inadequacy, he experienced in his eighteenth year an injury that sharply crystallized this attitude into a passional death. The ghost which as an apotheosis of his unlived life appears repeatedly in his later tales was liberated from this "death." Many aspects of his experience and work up to the very time of his actual death were oriented as movements back to and forward from this nucleus.

The broader application of the inherent pattern is familiar to readers of Edmund Wilson's recent volume, *The Wound and the Bow* (18). This title paraphrases the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles in which the hero's rare skill with the bow is portrayed as having a mysterious, if not supernatural, relationship to his stubbornly persistent wound—a snake bite to the foot. Abandoned in his illness for years on the island of Lemnos, Philoctetes is finally conducted to Troy, where he fights and kills Paris in single combat, thus becoming one of the great heroes of the Trojan War. Reviewing the experience and works of several well-known literary masters, Wilson discloses the sacrificial roots of their power on the model of the Greek legend. In the case of Henry James the present account not only provides a similar insight into the unhappy sources of his genius but reveals the aptness of the *Philoctetes* pattern even to the point where the bow of the wounded and exiled archer is at the last enlisted literally in a crucial military cause.

PSYCHOANALYTIC EPICRISIS

In the jargon of psychoanalysis the story just sketched could be retold as follows. The Oedipus situation of Henry James included a highly individualistic father—a cripple—and a gifted sibling rival (William) who together dwarfed the boy in his own eyes beyond hope of ever attaining their stature. A severe inferiority complex resulted. The problematic relationship to father and brother was solved submissively by a profound repression of aggressiveness.

At the age of eighteen, in the earliest days of the Civil War, Henry sustained a persistent physical injury. A keen sense of created impotence, combined with a possible suspicion of unconscious malingering, now crystallized his early sense of inferiority into "castration anxiety." The "obscure but intimate hurt" was experienced as involving not only the manliness of war, then socially so moot, but also the virility of love, which was focal in the adolescent stage of his individual development. Identification with the crippled ("castrated") but powerful father could have figured in the trauma both through the son's remarkably similar accident and in their common incapacitation. At the same time, the injury, interpreted more deeply, may have been unconsciously embraced as a token of filial submission: the acknowledged weakness was at once peculiarly appropriated as "an inexhaustible interest." Introversion in which both aggression and sexuality were repressed was now established as a *modus vivendi*.

The possible role of constitutional bisexuality should be noted in passing, even if only speculatively. Injuries like the one experienced by James may be conceived to subdue the more active and masculine components of personality and accentuate as a counterpoise the more passive and feminine ones. The creative drive of genius seems often to be enhanced even as its capacity is paradoxically also limited by such a destiny.

It was at any rate after his injury that James turned to the art of fiction. His writing served him both as an escape from frustration by way of fantasy and as a partial means of solving his problems through sublimation. But the fantasied escape proved insufficient, and he therefore soon abandoned the American scene that had become to him intolerable. During most of his life he lived in England. His various novels and tales written both before and after the departure from America acquired their notorious peculiarities—precious overqualification of style and restraint of sexual passion—from the repressed pattern of his life. The acute psychological insights in which his work abounds sprang in part, however, from the introspective vigilance allied with these "defects."

As James began to enter the final third of his life, a resurgence of his buried drives occurred. The supernatural stories which began to come from his pen during this period testify to this "return of the repressed." His ghosts consistently represent an apotheosis of the un-lived life. This fictional attempt to face again the early unsolved problems was followed compulsively by an actual revisit to America. As the criminal returns to the scene of his crime, James now went back

to the haunts of his catastrophe. But the neurotic repression failed to yield, and a severe nervous depression that expressed his sense of defeat ensued.

With the outbreak of World War I soon following, when he was already over seventy, came a final effort at solution—now not by sublimation in fiction, by escape or return, but in relationships to the real social world. It is not surprising that a note of overcompensation was present in these war activities, especially in the assumption of British citizenship, and that his end was probably hastened by his profligate expenditure of energy. But in large measure he re-established contact with the realities of his environment by these acts and in the same degree he thus succeeded in laying the ghost of his un-lived past before death overtook him.

Three wars are thus spanned by the ghost of Henry James: the Civil War, which evoked it mortally in his youth; World War I, which permitted it to be laid before his death; and World War II, which, occurring during the centenary of his birth, recalls it anew in the immortal sense.

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Books

THE COMEDY OF THE DIVINE

JOSEPH THE PROVIDER. By *Thomas Mann*. Alfred A. Knopf. \$3.00

THE LAST volume of Mann's transcendental comedy finds the hero in the pit for the second time. The excess of love he had permitted to grow in Potiphar's wife has brought him to the dungeon, thus completing the cycle begun when the excess of hate he had aroused in his brothers caused them to thrust him into the empty well in the desert. But the second pit is, of course, like the first, a symbolic situation, preparing Joseph for passage to a new role, that of the exalted semi-divine administrator of Egypt's foodstuffs and the returned lost one of Jacob.

As the story has neared its last movement, Joseph has become increasingly aware that he is really an actor in a sublime charade, which Mann calls at its conclusion the "God-invention of Joseph and His Brothers." Everything has been working to make the favorite son of the last of the Fathers a provider for many and to bestow upon him a special place in the hereditary descent. And the figure of this design has become unmistakable to Joseph himself—it is almost as if he had read his own story in the Bible. Thus he feels himself to be something of an author and stage manager of his own epic, it being his duty to act in such a way as not to let the great Plot down. "What a history, Mai, is this we are in!" he exclaims to his steward. "One of the very best. And now it depends on us, it is our affair to give it a fine form and make something perfectly beautiful of it, putting all our wits at the service of God."

Once again, therefore, Mann is re-telling the story of the Artist. But Joseph is not a divided man like Aschenbach or Tonio Kröger. For he is living a story, not writing one, and his story was "written by God," who, in one way or another, always puts an end to vacillations.

Possessing such a high degree of consciousness as to what he has to expect at every turn, Mann's Joseph is not quite serious, in the emotional sense. His session in the second pit is definitely not "a dark night of the soul." Nor are his aggrandisement by Pharaoh and his subsequent encounters with his brothers and his father profound in dramatic feeling. They belong rather to an idyllic pageantry of correct gestures, decorating a procession of tableaux moving towards a sad-happy ending . . . A story "written by God" can only be commented upon by man, and like a jesting rabbi Mann appeals to the mind's pleasure in beholding with mingled awe, credulousness and skepticism, a legend that has become part of itself.

In brief, the *Joseph* series, like his earlier works, reveals that Mann's distinction lies less in his talents as a dramatist than in his genius as a dialectical comedian, in the highest sense of the term. And the idea of the god-story is a genuine contribution to his system of high-comedy conceptions. Whether or not God actually exists, His relation to man is an absolute cultural and psychological fact, and Mann's half-lyrical, half-mocking reverence for this fact is in the tradition of the great humanists. Like Kafka, Mann examines the specific data of the divine with a radical literalness only possible in a scientific culture.

It is part of Mann's later method to define characters in terms of their gods. For men "only imitate the gods, and whatever picture they make of them, that they copy." Thus Potiphar's wife, after the collapse of her infatuation, switched her gods from the "omni-friendly Atum-Re of On, Lord of the Wide Horizon," to "him rich in bulls of Ipet-Isowet, and to his conservative sun-sense." Needless to say, her body now grew hard and spare. For the god is Mann's key to the "I-Thou feeling" of the individual; one who worships a soft voluptuous god, drunken with goodwill, cannot but be somewhat dim in outline and gracefully imprecise in personal mannerism.

The god lies in the deepest source of individual feeling. But he is more than personal; he gives his form to political philosophies, moral codes, esthetic attitudes, as well as to rituals and conventions. Hence the god-conception of the individual is more inclusive imaginatively than that of individual psychology, for it touches upon psychology at the point where it is one with social behavior and cultural history. Joseph, bound to a strange god, feels differently from the Egyptians, acts differently, comes from elsewhere, and has a different story to tell. That is, he is an alien—and Mann shows that when we speak of the alien what we mean is simply one who tells a different story intervened in by a different god.

In the sense that individual life is determined from outside the self, all stories of men are "written by God."

But when, at the moment that he is living his story, one is conscious of a specific plan in this "outsidedness" of self, when he knows that all the fluctuations of feeling and hazards of event have a steadfast core and central plot-direction, then he is driven to think and talk a double language, in order to represent at the same time the eternal seamless *deducible* god-narrative, finished and known before it is even begun, and the eroded accidental human episodes by which it is taken down into duration and made into the actual life of a man or woman. This double language we know as *wit*, and its function is to mediate between the gross fact and the compelling dream of meaning inseparable from it. In this respect wit has, of course, analogies with science.

It is a matter of both philosophical and stylistic doctrine with Mann that to get to the bottom of a situation demands breaking through layer

upon layer of titillating ambiguities. "Just because it is so solemn it must be treated with a light touch. For lightness, my friend, flippancy, the artful jest, that is God's very best gift to man, the profoundest knowledge we have of that complex, questionable thing we call life."

A mind even faintly touched by modern positivism will have observed that everything divine is always ambiguous—the breath of inspiration is also the wind of Chaos. Mann seems to derive an interesting reverse principle from this phenomenon. Everything divine is ambiguous? Well, then, perhaps everything ambiguous is divine. (Compare William Empson's theory that the ambiguous is the sign of the poetic.) The ambiguous, the many-in-the-one, resembles always the dream and the vision, has most likely the same source, and provides in the witness a similar dreamy sensation of dispersion and yet discovery.

In any case, Joseph demonstrates his divine election by habitually dealing in ambiguities. With these he fascinates the decadent Amen-hotep, as he had earlier seduced the "formal" Potiphar, god's eunuch. "All your speaking," says the delighted Pharaoh, "turns on the Yes and at the same time on the No. . . . The wrong right one, you say, and the wrong one that was the right one? That is not bad; it is so crazy that it is witty."

Because, then, he is a conscious character in a god-story, Joseph is a wit, and the same is true of the other lead-personages of his tribe. It is evident that for Mann the Jews are a people of wit, since they have always been faced with the need to reconcile opposites. From the start they were aware that God had a plan for them, yet, perhaps because they were people compelled to fight for bread rather than a ruling caste, something made them hang on to the here-and-now—they did not spoil their story by converting it into a masquerade of spirits. The Fathers were dreamers of the sheepfold who had discovered an absolute identity and drama for themselves and learned to come to terms with it through a masterly sharpness in shuffling antitheses. This humanistic and dramatic religion of the early Jews, which seen in this perspective hardly seems a religion at all, Mann tries to mould by innuendo into whatever there is in the Greek and Christian traditions that is also witty and double-minded in relation to earth and spirit. The humanistic ideal is the ironist who unites in himself the most solid here-and-now with a sense of the remotest unknown. That is why the confronting of Joseph and Amen-hotep is the intellectual climax of the whole narrative, and even, as Mann says, the big scene for which the whole story is a preparation. Egypt had no ironists, and its imagination remained divided. It was a culture that contributed to religion and science but gave nothing to the progress of living human relations. And the scion of Jacob-Ulysses, who believes in the most-distant-and-nearest god, reveals this weakness of the Egyptian "monkey-land" when he faces the mystical and feeble Amen-

hotep, excessively godly and therefore life-denying, and takes from him the staff of authority in order to feed the peoples through the dream of hunger and plenty.

Mann's own rabbinical wit is at its most characteristic in the analysis of the seven years of fatness and drought dreamed of by Pharaoh and foreseen by him through the Socratic prodding of Joseph. Could those solid and symmetrical numerals actually stand up under investigation? Were the good years all equally good and the bad ones equally bad? "In these fourteen years things were neither quite so definitely good nor so definitely bad as the prophecy would have them. It was fulfilled, no doubt about that. But fulfilled as life fulfils, imprecisely. For life and reality always assert a certain independence, sometimes on such a scale as to blur the prophecy out of all recognition. Of course, life is bound to the prophecy; but within those limits it moves so freely that one almost has one's choice as to whether the prophecy has been fulfilled or not. . . . In fact and in reality the prophesied seven looked rather more like five. . . . The fat and the lean years did not come out of the womb of time to balance each other so unequivocally as in the dream . . . [they] were like life in not being entirely fat or entirely lean . . . Indeed, if the prophecy had not existed [a couple of the lean years] might not have been recognized as years of famine at all." This passage may well be recommended to all the naive: *i.e.*, to those who see history following a plan, and to those who do not see it following a plan.

Joseph is Mann's second image of the Provider. Peeperkorn, in *The Magic Mountain*, was also a "Provider," though in a less literal sense. He did not overcome a famine and feed nations, he only provided a marvelously simple and tasty supper for the glutted consumptives of Behren's sanitarium. But with his golden omelets and pure grain gin he "fed" them, bringing back to food those who had only known how to surfeit themselves with meals.

The Provider is a life-bringer, whose sign is the riches of the earth. But by these very tokens of the material world he identifies himself also with the mysteries of creation and spirit. He is rich because he is *whole*. Mounting above the contradictions which Mann finds in every culture, contradictions arising out of the duality matter and spirit, the Provider lives simultaneously in both worlds as a dynamic synthesis. And this wholeness marks him as most human and yet also divine. Able to bring gifts to man because he receives from both god and nature, the Provider is associated with Providence itself.

The sublime wholeness of Peeperkorn lay in the peculiar quality of his personality, which Mann tried to convey through reflecting it in other characters of the novel as something great and overwhelming. Peeperkorn did not do or say anything great, he merely *was* great. He was a symbol of a philosophical wishfulfillment, he represented a need of

thought. Much as we were asked to see in his inarticulate impressiveness, his drunken balance, and his cohesive and inspiring effect upon a crowd, a Dionysius disguised as a Dutch businessman, still Peeperkorn remained a Dionysius reeling in a grove of categories. For he lacked an objective drama commensurate with his size in his author's mind.

Tradition supplies this lack in the case of Joseph. Joseph has a stage on which to be great. He is an actual historical and legendary Provider, whose matchless talents for dreams and management altered the historical course of at least two nations. Joseph is a figure with a great human purpose, in addition to the human-and-divine Being of Peeperkorn. In fact, so obvious is his greatness that Mann does not have to insist on it, as he did with Peeperkorn—he can even afford to run him down a little and put him in his place.

Joseph also had a remarkably picturesque and coherent personal history, involving a doting father, jealous brothers, crimes, seductions, and sudden reversals of fortune. While Peeperkorn's uniqueness remains a mystery of intuition, Joseph identifies himself more tangibly by the unique story he has to tell about his ancestors and himself. Thus in finding a story for his hero, Mann arrives at a more profound and concrete conception of greatness—that it is not merely a metaphysical quality belonging to the isolated individual, but that it comes from the human tradition which the individual repeats in himself and renews as the story of his own life.

But though the *Joseph* series is in many ways more philosophical than *The Magic Mountain*, it is less perfect as a literary work and actually smaller though it has many more pages. *The Magic Mountain*, just because it lacked the great story and had to rely on a flying framework of analogies, was superior in formal tension, imagery and the compression of ideas. Mann felt the need for the Story to fill out his conception of human greatness—but this too shows that he was not interested in the story as a story but in its systematic dialectical possibilities. Mann is the St. Thomas of the humanist Whole Man rather than his Shakespeare or Tolstoy.

HAROLD ROSENBERG

CROCE, THE CABBAGE AND THE GOAT

GERMANY AND EUROPE. By Benedetto Croce. Translated and with an introduction by Vincent Sheean. Random House. \$1.50

"CROCE," says Vincent Sheean, "is an Italian Socrates"—a Socrates, one might add, who answers his own questions. The monologue is at times brilliant, but very often its conclusions make sense only to people who already accept its premises.

I wonder how much sense Croce's reflections on Germany will make

to an American reader who, at the present turning point of history, asks himself one of the current and more or less well stated questions about Germany and Germans. He will learn from Croce that the quarrel between Germany and Europe is a "spiritual dissension" and, as such, can be solved only by spiritual means. Nazism, on the other hand, represents an historical crisis of German development and German antagonism to Europe which must be healed by historical means, namely, "all means that present themselves when and as they become necessary, from rigor to indulgence, from exclusion to collaboration, from severity to cordiality, from conflict to conciliation." In other words, on the spiritual plane you are allowed to use only spiritual means, but when it comes to historical contingencies any means are good enough.

"Upon this," Croce adds, "there is no longer any need to dwell, all the more because not a few, in England and America, have understood this necessity and have begun to meditate around it expounding concepts and designs which are both human and wise." One would like to know the names of these wise men, but Croce's certificate of wisdom and humaneness is issued to anonymous characters. Could it be that he is referring to Vansittart & Co.? Anyway, while objecting to the dismemberment of the German nation (because he believes nations to be necessary categories of human life) and agreeing that "no poisonous humiliation" should be inflicted on the German people, Croce would accept the application of "all means that present themselves" to the healing of the German evil. One is then entitled to deduce that nothing prevents a reasonable measure of dismemberment and a moderate dose of poisoning humiliation from presenting themselves, at a given moment, as necessary and appropriate pedagogical means.

It seems that so long as these means do not claim an absolute philosophical validity, everything is as it should be.

The American will probably be puzzled, and deem it rather pointless that an outstanding European philosopher should expound such irrelevancies on such a grave problem. An Italian, however, will simply recognize Croce's old skill in avoiding the real issues, and discussing only their shadows on Croce's private wall.

If Croce's conclusions on Germany and Nazism are so immaterial, it is, of course, because he had to dodge too many facts and defend too many things at the same time.

In his early days, the Neapolitan scholar loved not only German culture, but also State power and power politics, maintaining that Force should rule unhampered the relations between peoples, and consequently admiring the German Empire as the state endowed with the best political philosophy in Europe. And these ideas were not peculiarly his own. They were shared in varying degrees of clarity and moderation, by a considerable section of the Italian ruling class and the intellectuals. Now Croce has seen not only domestic fascism, but the very face of unhampered

force, in the Prussian officers who set fire to the Archives of Naples and shot people at random; and not only that, but the total collapse of the State organization on which those bold conceptions were based. Since nothing can be the matter with ideas, and even less with a political and social set-up which did not have Mussolini at its head, something must be the matter with the Germans. But Croce is too well educated to become a hater of nations or races. He is himself a nationalist, at least in the sense that he attributes to the "Nation" the character of an ultimate reality. And precisely for this reason, he is unable to look for an explanation elsewhere than in national myths. So he points out that Germany "does not have the civilization of Greece and Rome and that of Christianity at the origins of its national history, but the ferocity and devostatory impulse of the barbarian invasions." Which, of course, is a commonplace that explains nothing, and can only serve the purposes of that base propaganda strongly condemned (and for the wrong reasons) by the same Croce during the anti-German frenzy of the First World War. Christianity, one could retort, was taken more seriously in Germany than, let's say, in Italy; and Greece and Rome were not taken lightly either, in the land of Melancthon, Hoelderlin and Mommsen.

But the ugly core of Croce's embarrassment is to be found in his discovery of "a deep and intimate difference between Nazism and Fascism, because the first was a terrible crisis which has been brooding in the history of Germany through centuries, and the second was a superfetation foreign to the history of Italy through the centuries and repugnant to the recent and glorious Italian history of the nineteenth century." It would seem that while nazism has some kind of rational explanation, fascism has no explanation at all. In plain words, Italian nationalism and the Italian State were all right, except for the fascist meteorite, but German nationalism and the German State were bad by nature. The one has to be absolved and restored, the other has to be punished.

This platitude reflects very faithfully the position of those relics of the Italian ruling classes who are now begging for mercy and comprehension from Messrs. Churchill and Roosevelt. Confronted with the impossible riddle of saving all their national paraphernalia *in the name* of national defeat, they are unable to find a more dignified solution than hurriedly trying to drown the German goat, in the hope that the Allied wolf will not care for their cabbage. Their great ambition is "to sit at the peace table with the Allies"—and with the king of Rumania. By all means, they want to be on the winning side. Like Mussolini. And, incredibly enough, they think that they are in this way defending the dignity and the interests of the Italian people. As things now stand, these relics will be represented at the peace table by a Monsignore working behind the scenes, and the Italian people will have to pay with economic, political and moral slavery for the frivolity of their ruling class. The upkeep of phantoms is very expensive.

NICOLA CHIAROMONTE

"BETWEEN SHALL-I AND I-WILL"

FOR THE TIME BEING. *By W. H. Auden. Random House.* \$2.00

V-LETTER AND OTHER POEMS. *By Karl Shapiro. Reynal and Hitchcock.* \$2.00

MODERATE FABLE. *By Marguerite Young. Reynal and Hitchcock.* \$2.00

THE GOLDEN MIRROR. *By Marya Zaturenska. Macmillan.* \$1.75

TAKE THEM, STRANGER. *By Babette Deutsch. Henry Holt.* \$2.00

THESE five books show how impossible it has become for us to respond to "pure" feeling, and how poetry has gravitated toward complex internal conditions.

Miss Zaturenska, for example, possesses a sensibility; but her "lucid dream" is not caught and the language, playing over a certain wistfulness, recalls the Pre-Raphaelite surface of Rossetti or Swinburne, without, however, the adroitness of Pre-Raphaelite design. One has simply a sense of "poetic" inflation. Except for "Annunciation," a macabre sonnet deeply experienced, the response of Miss Deutsch to a suffering world is one of uncomplicated distress and uncomplicated optimism—"The race goes on although the track is blind." Technically Miss Deutsch remains devoted to imagist devices that are only occasionally hard and dry enough—Tennyson *cum* imagism.

If Miss Young is "external," she accomplishes quite different effects. She still lingers on prismatic ground in the sense that the purely conceptual tension of many of her poems is relatively too great; that is, she writes a poetry of ideas rather than a thoughtful or meditative poetry. Having moved from an earlier concern with the local to an interplanetary point of view that entails some sacrifice of humanity, she is much concerned with themes of space, time, process, illusion and reality. These could well lead, as they do in Auden, to contemplative verse; in her case they frequently remain on the level of the conceptual rather than speculative, as in "The Responsibility of Parentage." The serious danger is cleverness and a polymath obscurity. To be sure, this very reliance upon the cerebral makes possible some of the most successful poems—"That Chance," "A Crystal Principle," "A High Subjectivity." C. Day Lewis expected that poetry would increasingly assimilate the science of the century. Miss Young does not entirely fulfill this expectation; she cultivates astonishment and seems to presume that a large subject makes a large poem. She is at her best (which is very nimble) whenever the language of the sense interpenetrates the language of concept, resulting in genuinely metaphysical equivalence of mind and flesh:

. . . and valid in being therefore
And beautiful, the escape from each simple of total
Is the heartbeat thief, mistake, flaw
Permitting his purple eye and whitened skull.

In spite of the pressure behind "Null Class" or "Farewell at the

Station" or "At the Cinema" the tension of the verse, with its density and glitter of metaphor, is usually on the surface—the sort of intensity that one feels in mosaics, hard, Byzantine, rigidly iconographic. Undeniably Miss Young can also be subtle—

The idea of the universe is inconclusive

As albino nuns with partridge eyes and silk lashes,

As choirs of widows veiled in snowlight . . .

Although she might well abandon Hopkins-like mannerisms, the cadences are very artful. This second volume of strangely exciting poetry puts her talent beyond question.

The inwardness of Shapiro's verse has naturally been affected by his service in the South Pacific. Since Melbourne and Sydney must remain alien to one so deeply involved in the American milieu, Shapiro has wisely determined to guard against becoming simply a war poet. Instead, he has sought resources within himself, "the man in war." These resources are available by his honesty. He remains a "double man," moving awarely and tolerantly through the ambiguities of his situation. "I try to write freely," he explains, "one day as a Christian, the next as a Jew, the next as a soldier who sees the gigantic slapstick of modern war." He feels "divested of the stock attitudes of the last generation, the stance of the political intellectual, the proletarian," and the "pundit-poet."

Beset with difficulties as this position is, Shapiro's orientation seems admirably sound. The evidence of this soundness is the mood of "The Descent" and "The Geographers," or his "Elegy for a Dead Soldier," indicating with its severe formalism where he finds himself—unheroic, completely aware, detached, self-possessed, able to qualify here and discriminate there, and wary of cynicism. His slain companion may have regarded the war only as a detour "that would steer/Into the Lincoln Highway of a land/Remorselessly improved, excited, new"—but he also died for "a peace kept by a human creed." Here is a measure of progress from the war poetry of 1914-18. "The Intellectual," with its fierce contempt of *l'homme qui rit*, shows what we learned from the easy bitterness of the twenties and thirties.

The poems on Jewish themes—"Jew," "Shylock," "Moses"—come with heavy impact, and "The Synagogue" attains the hieratic gravity of Eliot's verse without preciousness and without posturing:

Our wine is wine, our bread is harvest bread

That feeds the body and is not the body.

Our blessing is to wine but not the blood

Nor to sangreal the sacred dish. We bless

The whiteness of the dish and bless the water

And are not anthropophagous to him.

There are sallies, also, in the Swiftian temper of the first volume—notably "Satire: Anxiety," "V-Letter" and "Birthday Poem" are as full-blooded as the earlier "A Robbery," and poems like "The Leg," with the

anguish of war, are unflinching but without the dark brutalism of Hemingway. Certain poems of immature tone Shapiro might have omitted had he been able to select and edit in person. Clearly, however, he did not need war "to test externality against the soul."

The course of Auden has now become plainer through *For the Time Being* (a semi-dramatic verse-prose commentary on *The Tempest*, "The Sea and the Mirror," that really introduces the following Christmas Oratorio). The basic theme of "The Sea and the Mirror," the relation between illusion and reality in science, in social reform, in art, in living, is most fully developed through the resignation of Prospero, intellectual and reformer, to his failure, and through the prose discourse of Caliban. This Caliban monologue is Auden's confessional: living in the Grandly Average Place will not do, an art reflecting our illusions or dedicated to social reform will not do; indeed art at its most accomplished is self-tormenting and self-defeating—there is, at last, nothing to say. The Word remains our only *raison d'être*.

Thus the early Auden, half Byronic intellectual of the middle classes, has been transcended by the humanistic-stoic, who has now in turn been transcended by the convert to the Word comprehended with an intuition sensitized by Kierkegaard particularly, as well as by Freud, Eliot, Rilke, and many others. In *For the Time Being* Auden performs a metabasis, a leap from time to the Timeless. In a sense this leap solves nothing, but instead creates a new dilemma: is Auden to take the Plotinian flight of the alone to the Alone, the mystical course that ends in silence; or will he find, like Eliot, that the Letter giveth life, that he becomes increasingly dependent upon ritual (passages in the Oratorio might occur in the *Four Quartets*). Auden's position is highly individual. He mistrusts dogma, as did Kierkegaard, for whom truth was an absurdity held fast in the passion of inwardness, and his deep sense of the comic, again like Kierkegaard's, would check any rational formulation of faith; yet he falls back upon liturgy. Thus the Oratorio gives the impression of liturgy dissociated from any dogma. In the Oratorio and the preceding "The Sea and the Mirror"—that is, in Auden's view of both faith and art—the individual, as in Kierkegaard, by an absurdity partakes of the infinite only through existing *in* time and circumstance.

The main issue is whether Auden as a person legitimately turning to the Word, will not suffer as a poet. From this view *For the Time Being* may mark a retrogression, signify a danger. In *Another Time*, "In Time of War," and *The Double Man* Auden, pressed from the cynicism and flippancy of his early social verse, had achieved a mediation (Kierkegaard repudiates mediation) in the form of a paradoxical but effective stoicism. The points of contact between the Auden of 1939-41 and the classical Stoics, both living among dissolving values, were notable. Both Auden and the Stoics accepted the world as process, material but not mechanical; both subordinated to the practical moral faculty the science of the

time, meanwhile undogmatically and sceptically accommodating themselves to the current religions; both, with a cosmopolitan sense of the community of man, were deeply sensitive to the pain of living and were consequently humane; both united *autarke*, self-reliance, with humility and submission to necessity, and found the terms of freedom in that very necessity; both accepted a radical, almost pantheistic, optimism, together with a recognition that individual experience is full of evil. This sort of stoicism has a range of austerity different from the liturgical austerity of Eliot, and it is a little disturbing to find Auden's Oratorio carried along by a liturgical austerity. Necessary, understandable, profound as Auden's turn to the Word may be, one ponders whether the sacrifice of the previous stoicism or its subordination is not a serious loss for everyone but Auden himself. Critics used to worry about Auden's audience—who they were. Because of our modern situation, our being double in ourselves, Auden's stoicism spoke meaningfully to a large number of us, as the present book may not.

This is not to depreciate the sharp insight of the new book or to deny its amazing virtuosity, its daring comedy. The waggish casuistry of Herod or the thesis of Antonio, immedicable resistant Evil and Ego, show how Auden can extend traditional implications for his own uses. Never has Auden's prose been so weighted, so allusive, so poetic, with astonishing reverberations of James, Meredith, and the metaphysicals like Browne. Caliban's discourse should take its place beside the essays by James on fiction and by Meredith on comedy; it alone would justify the volume. In the ensuing Oratorio Auden surely executes his Kierkegaard-like leap into the Timeless, that ascent of the Glassy Mountain offering no foothold to logic. The question is whether his appropriation of the Word can redeem our Time Being from insignificance.

WYLIE SYPHER

THE PITFALLS OF HISTORY

BASIC HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES. *By Charles A. and Mary R. Beard. The New Home Library.* \$.69.

THIS is a sad book and a disappointing one. The disappointment comes from its authors' failure to transcend the limitations of the liberal-progressive point of view; the sadness because it illustrates in microcosm the tragic shortcomings of the progressive tradition in the great crises of 1941-17 and 1937-41.

The Beards wish to understand why the American people within the past three decades were pressed unenthusiastically into two great

foreign wars whose prosecution had disastrous consequences for the civilization of the United States. They find the answer in a radical perversion of policy at the turn of the twentieth century—a breach with historical continentalism which turned the attention of Americans away from the internal development of their own society and, under the influence of giddy minds (which inexplicably gained control), led them into foreign quarrels. To establish the character of that perversion, they endow American development until 1890 with a consistently nationalistic character. The seeds of nationalism, already present before emigration, developed rapidly in the colonial period, and then, cut free from European restraints by the war for independence, flowered in the early nineteenth century, lending impetus to the conquest of the west. As the American spirit matured, despite the set-back of the abortive revolt of 1861, it kept interests centred at home and consolidated the resources of the continent with the tools of industrialism.

To uphold this argument, the Beards are, time and again, forced on to tenuous ground and driven to positions they cannot defend. They must seek among the causes for emigration to the new world an amorphous and undefined *élan* that, from the beginning, cut off Americans from those who remained behind. They must assert that American character was so well developed and so different from the English by 1774 that the revolution was a conflict of divergent ideologies. And they must minimize the great weight of evidence against their position. If Tom Paine could step from the ship that carried him to Philadelphia in November, 1774 and give immediate expression to the spirit of the revolution, surely its ideas must have developed in England as well as in America. How explain away the fact that China in the economic life of New England, and Britain, in that of the south, were more important in 1824, the year of the Monroe Doctrine, than in 1898, the year of the Spanish-American War? The very humanitarian strivings,—abolition, women's rights, prison reform, universal education, and the rest,—which, to the Beards epitomize the idea of civilization in the United States, were international in character and origin; not only did analogous movements proliferate everywhere in western Europe, but there were even substantial organizational ties. Nor were Americans ever politically aloof from the social crises of the old world. The young men who fought for Greek and Polish independence in the 1820's and the 1830's, the cheering congressmen who welcomed Kossuth in 1851, the sloop-of-war *Saint Louis* which rescued a Hungarian revolutionary from off an Austrian brig in Turkish waters, the Cambridge literati who lionized Bakunin, reaffirmed Webster's assertion in a formal state paper that Americans could not "fail to cherish always a lively interest in the fortunes of nations struggling for institutions like their own." Wilson's slogan fell upon receptive ears because Americans had been interested in making the world safe for democracy.

In expounding an isolationism which never existed, the Beards have overlooked the truly significant change in American attitudes at the end of the nineteenth century. Interest in foreign affairs was not new; it was different. The earlier liberal humanitarian alliance with the forces seeking democracy and economic amelioration for the European masses gave way to a tacit alliance with the British empire; the aspirations of manifest destiny for the extension of American citizenship and American liberties were edged out by those of imperialism for the rule over subject and inferior races. There is an excellent picture, properly bitter, of the American empire builders, of the elder Roosevelt's power-lusty demagoguery, of the bloodthirsty refinement of Henry Cabot Lodge, and of the stupid complacency of Josiah Strong, the Goebbels of Protestantism. But by dismissing these as extraneous, the Beards obscure the most fundamental problems of how such forces flourished in American soil.

More generally, the nationalistic tenor of this work lends a curiously causeless aspect to parts of the narrative. The theme of the Beards' writing until now has been the conflict of interests between the agrarian and capitalist elements in American life. Their interpretations in terms of this leading idea have been sometimes penetrating, sometimes oversimple, but always consistent. In this book stress upon unity of national character overshadows the diversity of class and interest. The very chapter headings illustrate the difference between the earlier *Rise of American Civilization* and this work: "Independence and Civil Conflict" becomes "Independence Completed by Revolution;" "Populism and Reaction" becomes "Constitutional Government in the United States;" "Agricultural Imperialism and the Balance of Power" becomes "The Revolutionary Generation in Charge of the Federal Government;" and "The Second American Revolution," the conflict of agrarian planters against industrial capitalists, becomes "National Unity Sealed in an Armed Contest." In some place the change is an improvement. But too often the old interpretation drops out, nothing replaces it, and the account acquires a biblical "it came to pass" flavor.

Few historians can display the urbanity, the scope of interest and the human insight the Beards show on page after page of this book. Such chapters as those on the progressive movement and on the spirit of early republicanism are classics of close writing and clear thinking. The need for compression forces an excision of incidentals that brings the essentials into clear and unambiguous focus, while an enviable grasp of the proportions of the whole provides perspective and balance. But we must count it among the additional tragedies of a world at war that the Beards did not escape the isolationist pitfall which, to too many liberals, seems the only alternative to contemporary foreign policy.

OSCAR HANDLIN

SYMPOSIUM ON RUSSELL

THE PHILOSOPHY OF BERTRAND RUSSELL. (*Volume V in "The Library of Living Philosophers."*) Edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp. Northwestern University. \$4.00

THIS, THE fifth volume in "The Library of Living Philosophers," proceeds according to plan. Twenty-one distinguished contributors have their say about Mr. Russell's philosophy over a wide range of agreement and disagreement, with Mr. Russell replying by and large, and as might be expected, in kind. There is an autobiographical sketch, somewhat primly called "My Mental Development" and opening with the flavor of a nineteenth century account: "My mother having died when I was two years old, and my father when I was three, I was brought up in the house of my grandfather, Lord John Russell, afterwards Earl Russell. Of my parents, Lord and Lady Amberley, I was told almost nothing—so little that I vaguely sensed a dark mystery." The volume is rounded off with bibliography and index.

The discussions are comprehensive, including fields like ethics and religion in which he comes close to disclaiming a philosophy and admitting only opinion. Roughly two-thirds of the articles are devoted, naturally, to the more professional aspects of Mr. Russell's philosophical writings, which have never constituted casual reading. If understanding is what is wanted, in accordance with the purpose of the series, Mr. Russell's approval as expressed in his replies may be taken as recommending the articles by Hans Reichenbach, Morris Weitz, G. E. Moore, A. P. Ushenko, Roderick M. Chisholm as adequate statements of some of his basic conclusions. Morris Weitz' contribution ought to be mentioned in particular; it has done Mr. Russell a service in setting forth, sympathetically, the fundamental unity in his philosophy which the academic wits have, for the sake of a bad joke, persisted in overlooking. So far as criticism is concerned, the discussion of Russell's philosophy of science by Ernest Nagel appears to be the most fundamental in the volume—the most fundamental, at any rate, if theory of knowledge is taken as philosophically crucial. And in an extra-curricular way, G. E. Moore's analysis of Russell's theory of descriptions is remarkable as a stylistic *tour de force*. By conversational tricks, by frank explicitness and repetition, it succeeds in pervading a thoroughly recalcitrant subject-matter with something like an ingenuous air.

A volume like this, presenting as it does a complete view, raises the question of Mr. Russell's place in contemporary thought. In a discussion of his ethics, Justus Buchler calls Russell a good representative of this century. He may be in the special sense in which Mr. Buchler regards him; yet insofar as recent thought has tried to escape egocentricity he assuredly is not. As Russell indicates in the autobiography, he takes for granted that theory of knowledge must ask, "How do I know what I

know?" and he italicizes the "I." He does not deny the egocentricity of his method (just as he does not deny the charge of "atomism"), and there is no doubt that it is central to his point of view. It is evident enough, certainly, in his perennial attempt to track down psychological primitives to serve as the ultimate warrants of belief and the simples of traditional epistemology. But his egocentricity goes beyond theory of knowledge—so far and so consistently, in fact, as to constitute a state of mind. It is practically the substance of his ethical theory, in which the good and the bad are the objects of desire and aversion, respectively; this is saying that the individual is the center, and the standard, of Mr. Russell's ethical universe. His egocentricity is carried over into his political philosophy as a matter of course, at least insofar as he feels the need to ground historical analysis in individual instinct and impulse. With regard to his treatment of Russia, incidentally, which condemned Bolshevism as early as 1920 with a prescience generated as much perhaps by the essential simplicity of his analytical tools as by genuine sociological insight, the Stalinist apology by V. J. McGill is a masterpiece of philosophic calm and irrelevance. It sometimes reaches this level: "Increasingly it is being recognized, as the War progresses, that, just as Hitler represents the predatory power of big German industrialists and Junkers, so Stalin symbolizes the embattled power of the vast majority of Russian people, workers of hand and brain, of the city and the country," a level which turns one in favor of Mr. Russell's brand of simplicity, which, if it exists, is only methodological.

In very general terms, it is probably fair to say that Russell is ultimately unsatisfactory (apart from his contributions to symbolic logic and the foundations of mathematics, of course, which are common property) because he has no respect for the philosophic dignity of the social event. This is not to say that as citizen or scientist he does not take society seriously; it is obvious that he does and that in return certain elements in society are very concerned about him. Rather, it is plain that the social situation does not measure up to his notion of what a proper starting-point, or a legitimate sovereignty, ought to be. He cannot take the knowledge-situation as philosophically significant, informed as it is by a common sense mainly social in character. In his political analyses, the levelling off of power to the status of a primary motive shows the same lack of respect for the irreducibility of the social process. And in his ethics and philosophy of religion, only the bare outlines of a minimum personal expression are visible; there is no surrender to provocative social myth, and if a wisdom of the ages exists, Mr. Russell does not speak for it.

As Mr. Schilpp points out in his editorial preface, Mr. Russell's replies are brief, due apparently to his consternation at the lack of understanding of his philosophy exhibited by some of the contributors. Mr. Schilpp takes this as a challenge—how seriously it is impossible to say—

to the worth of the whole Living Philosophers project. Yet the series would be worthwhile even if each volume were nothing more than an interesting event among the dry bones of academic philosophy. Anything else the series achieves in the way of understanding and clarification is so much to the good.

GERTRUDE JAEGER

HEROIC VITALISTS

A CENTURY OF HERO-WORSHIP. *By Eric Russell Bentley. J. B. Lippincott.* \$3.50.

MR. BENTLEY'S purpose is to sift out of the Romantic-Heroic Movement those attitudes and emotions which are usable today. He writes as a Jamesian pragmatist, and he analyzes and dramatizes the attitudes of the Romantic hero-worshippers in order to show that when they were right, they were pragmatists. Mr. Bentley vigorously calls the intellectual "aristocracy" of our day to arms—pragmatic, "militant-democratic" arms. It will be crucial, then, to find out whether the author is in the best sense pragmatic.

Mr. Bentley examines those Romantics who were most concerned with the function in the modern world of the superior man: the artist, the political genius—in short, the Hero. He gives us substantial studies of Carlyle and Nietzsche, and slighter ones of Wagner, Shaw, Spengler, Stefan George (the George chapter appeared in this magazine), and D. H. Lawrence. His method is biographical. Mr. Bentley is a very good biographer, a determined and perceptive psychologist. We feel that we have caught the tone of Carlyle's cosmic pronouncements about Niggers, Slaves, and Heroes when we have read that his first victory was his victory "over the spirit of Jane Welsh Carlyle." Mr. Bentley is very good too in describing Nietzsche's complicated and pathetic relationship with Wagner and Cosima: Wotan-Wagner, Brünnhilde-Cosima, Siegfried-Nietzsche—a hopeless company. Bentley puzzles intelligently over Wagner's final failure to accept Siegfried as a Hero. He sets forth the monstrous metaphors of Spengler with unrelaxing cogency. And he very sensibly considers Lawrence as a great artist-personality haunted by his early life.

These hero-worshippers—Heroic Vitalists, Bentley calls them—were all tragi-comic, ambivalent men trying to resolve ambivalences. They lived and suffered in a world of bewildering contradictions. They were unbelievers, yet religion haunted them to the grave; they were all anarchists and all authoritarians; Nietzsche longed for both immortality and worldly success, he loved both Apollo and Dionysus, both Cesare Borgia and Buddha; Wagner was a democrat and a spiritual fascist; Lawrence

was torn between the gods of Love and Force. Out of these ambivalences (and a thousand others) came the Hero, the man who fused thought with action, the man beyond good and evil who allied himself with Destiny, who was in himself the resolution of a civilization's dilemmas. Mr. Bentley sees most of the dangers in Hero-worship, and when one of his authors is wrong, Mr. Bentley usually sees that he is. So much is all to the good.

There is in this book, however, a certain obtuseness of sensibility, which I did not fully discern until I reached the section on Shaw. Shaw is an embarrassment to the book. We are told first that he is really *not* an Heroic Vitalist, but we do not learn what he *is*, except that somehow he is a "militant democrat" and "pragmatist," nearly (so it seems) indistinguishable in method from William James. Mr. Bentley is right in saying that the Heroic Vitalists were forerunners of James because they tried to cut through dichotomies, to "accept the universe," to deepen psychology, and to discover the function of the superior individual. But can we believe that Bentley is possessed of the generous, civilizing spirit of James' pragmatism when he tells us in effect that Shaw is a pragmatist because his Joan of Arc "has capability" and an "eye for artillery" and (apparently) because Shaw admires Stalin more than he admires Mussolini? (The passage about Stalin is exceptionally muddled, partly because we do not know which are Shaw's opinions and which Bentley's, and partly because Bentley's style degenerates into petulant and mysterious anathemas against "fools" and "these liberals" and Shelley's hatred of power politics.)

Nor do I think that it is in the spirit of pragmatism to talk so easily, as Mr. Bentley does throughout, of the need for men who can "create new values"—as if values were not involved in the world but only legislated by superior men. There is, to be sure, a precedent in James' own praise of Carlyle (in "The Dilemma of Determinism") for Bentley's insistence that esthetic standards should be kept out of moral problems, but I think this is a mistaken idea: they can be kept out only by force. And that Bentley is sometimes at war with esthetic standards is hinted in his tangential remark that T. S. Eliot's essays are "precious" and that coterie magazines "and the like" are "immodest." The question we ought to raise here is not whether T. S. Eliot is precious but whether Mr. Bentley is able to distinguish between "precious" and "esthetic." If he is not, then we shall have to suspect that heroic vitality and not the human mind is making judgments in this book.

A Century of Hero-Worship, having suggested how to resolve so many ambivalences, leaves the reader with a new one: his admiration for the author's intellectual dash and first-rate biographical powers, and his reservations about the working of the author's moral and esthetic sensibility.

RICHARD CHASE

BLOSSOM OF THE NETTLE

CRAZY LIKE A FOX. By S. J. Perelman. Random House. \$2.50

S. J. PERELMAN is an astute, genial and pitiless operative, whose quarry is the hugely comic potential in written matter at large. From crotchety trade journals, bleak slicks and pulps, the Victorian set piece or nasty bits of washing directive, he ferrets out the hapless fools and criminals of style and drags them to justice—that is, to their *Reductio ad absurdum*.

Perelman has two methods of exposing his victims: he lets them talk, gives them enough rope (but their speech is at the mercy of his supra-logical, Groucho Marx asides); or he dogs them, re-enacts their prose with a bouncing agility, caricaturing its meanest, most flagrant or most anonymous points. Either way the result is total.

He can coax out the absurd even from Dostoevsky. In "A Farewell to Omsk," after affecting the traditional, matter-of-fact, down-at-heels opening ("Late one afternoon in January, 18—, passersby in L. Street in the town of Omsk might have seen a curious sight."), he closes in on those orthodox unorthodoxies of psychological insight, those homely but distinctive phrases that gave to the Russian novel its tone of sardonic naturalism:

He was the son of a former notary public attached to the household of Prince Grashkin and gave himself no few airs in consequence. Whilst speaking it was his habit to extract a greasy barometer from his waistcoat and consult it importantly, a trick he had learned from the Prince's barber. On seeing Afya Afyakiévitch he skipped about nimbly, dusted off the counter, gave one of his numerous offspring a box on the ear, drank a cup of tea, and on the whole behaved like a man of the world who has affairs of moment occupying him.

Percy Hammond, a first-rate humorist in his own right, once asked Harold Lloyd what he did to make people laugh. "Act natural," Lloyd said, "in an unnatural situation."

There are plenty of unnatural situations in Perelman's pieces. But they are reduced to the commonplace by the author's offhand acceptance of the very macabre conditions he himself has devised. At the close of a dissertation on mushrooms that deals with the fungus to the exclusion of human characters, Perelman nonchalantly launches a conventional novelistic coda:

Little else remains to be told. Fred Patton, the former Erie train boy, still continues to rise in Mr. Proskauer's mercantile establishment on Ann Street, and Gloria Proskauer blushes prettily whenever Fred's name is uttered. . . . And so we leave the little snitch right smack up behind the eight-ball, and a good end for the mealy-mouthed, psalm-singing petty thief, if you ask me.

Perelman is a past-master of such nonsense, of the effortless non sequitur that manages "perspective through incongruity." It is this talent for what Coleridge termed "impropriety" and referred to as the positive

qualification of the laughable that gives Perelman's humor distinction. For a sense of incongruity is an aspect of the poetic principle, and just as the poet reinstates the relevance that exists in irrelevancies, the humorist reinstates the irrelevancies that exist in relevance.

If there is one criticism to which *Crazy Like a Fox* is susceptible, it is that it is a book. The forty-five short pieces that constitute it tempt the reader into taking large gulps of something that is most beneficial taken in small swallows. The themes are varied; the surprises fresh. But each piece is compounded of a sameness of attack and of equal parts of wit, paradox, fantasy and overturned cliché.

Read in easy stages, *Crazy Like a Fox* is first-rate humor, the truly comic, that ever sought-after blossom of the nettle.

HARVEY BREIT

A VARIETY OF FICTION

BOSTON ADVENTURE. *By Jean Stafford. Harcourt, Brace.* \$2.75

THIS unusual and absorbing first novel will pose a problem to those who hold that the artist may not isolate himself from the major concerns of his time. For *Boston Adventure* in the year 1944 is something of a freak: it deals neither with battle front nor home front, nor with the war or its causes in any possible sense whether indirect, analogical, or symbolic. Neither is it concerned with racial issues, juvenile delinquency, the new failure of nerve, or any other recognizable special problems of the day. Indeed the conversational references to Roosevelt and the New Deal seem distinctly out of place; but for the rather special fact that the nineteenth century in Boston will not lie down, it might be questioned whether it dealt with the twentieth century at all.

That the portrait of the upper ranges of Boston society is quietly blistering is certainly true; perhaps there may be a defense along the lines of Spender's discovery that Henry James concerned himself with the international elite only to immerse their society "in the destructive element." But that would be to limit severely the range of the book's value: the Bostonians with whom the book deals are a very special group, by no means easily seen as typical of any larger class. Even the destructiveness of the element is open to doubt; from the point of view of the critic the destruction is doubtless thorough, but from the point of view of the grip of the society itself the novel serves rather to emphasize its tenacity.

It may even be doubted whether those parts of the book are best which best follow the critical formula. Of the two characters whom we chiefly see being shaped by their environment it is certainly Hopestill Mather, the born but rebellious patrician, who better illustrates what a recent critic in *PARTISAN REVIEW* called "the malformation of

the self," not as "something happily given for clarity of dramatic focus" but as "the projection and criterion of a social situation in which we are inextricably involved." *Hopestill* is malformed because the life into which she is born is a prison that confines her temperament; and she is broken in the effort to break out of it. Her rebellion, after much Bostonian simmering, finally takes the form of New York and psychoanalysis; but no good comes of it. The brew is apparently too rich even for a protesting Boston debutante, and there follow, in order, a liaison with a cad, a prospective illegitimate child, a marriage of convenience and concealment back into Boston society, a miscarriage arranged with the collaboration of a horse, and her consequent death—presumably her one successful escape. It is this somewhat melodramatic collision of society and temperament which conducts the novel to its crisis; and all I can say of it is that is the one set of data in the novel which seems to me unreal and unconvincing. Perhaps too much depends on an unlikely contraceptive carelessness.

Against her is placed Sonie Marburg, the apparently non-autobiographical "I" of the book; and it is true that for her too that Boston society of which, as a poor child across the bay, she has dreamed as the unattainable ideal becomes itself another prison. Yet the careful structure of the novel makes it as clear as it can that it is not specifically Pinckney St., Boston, which makes her a prisoner, but rather the nature of her temperament which condemns her to be a prisoner in *any* society. The novel is divided in half; one half is devoted to her childhood as the daughter of poor immigrant parents in "Chichester" across the bay from Boston, the other to her progress in the drawing rooms of Boston. The unity of the book lies essentially in the Proustian ironies of similarity in diversity in the recurrences of the two parts. And of diversity in similarity too. So Miss Pride, who begins as Sonie's fairy queen, "the most generous woman in Boston," becomes the miser buying at bargain rates the power over human life that her nature demands.

The people who shape her life are very different in their own personalities, yet where their lives become tangent to Sonie's own they make recurring patterns. The two men she loves are superficially totally different, yet both have a physical deformity and a deeper deformity in their adaptation to life and to Sonie herself. There could hardly be a greater contrast than between Sonie's slatternly and childish mother, the prim and remorselessly competent Miss Pride, and the talented and convivial Countess von Happel; yet there is something in Sonie, some sense of duty and willful submissiveness, which makes her the predestined complement to self-centered women who dislike men and know, in their different ways, how to demand some compensation in human society. Hence the apparent liberation when her mother's childishness turns into insanity inevitably turns out to be another imprison-

ment; if the jailor were not Miss Pride it would be another; for Sonie's seems to be not malformation induced by a social situation, but by her own private temperament.

Yet it is this private temperament, I should insist, which makes the quality of the book. For Sonie's endurance of her lot gives her a detachment from it which is the proper climate for a reflective critic of society. "It takes an outlander to trap us alive," says Hopestill to Sonie; and Sonie (like Proust's Marcel, it may be noted) is an outlander not merely socially because she is born outside it, but spiritually as well because of her protective refusal of identity with it.* And since the other characters are screened through her perception, the tone of the book is the tone her temperament gives it: ironically observant, satirically detached, resignedly understanding.

The vehicle of this tone is the style of the novel, a style which is in itself enough to distinguish *Boston Adventure* from the run of the printing mills. That style is grave, a little formal, rather nineteenth-century in its affection for the highly wrought complex sentence: I do not think that I can better describe it than by saying that it reads very like Scott Moncrieff's translation of Proust. The resemblance to Proust by no means stops with the words and sentences; such a passage as this is typical:

"It can be said that memory is a sort of *entrepôt* serving the busy traffic of the unreflective mind, and that its stores, behind an unlocked door, may be rummaged through and plundered at any time; thus I had found the footsteps of the old ladies walking in the sand at Chichester to match the lameness of Philip's grandmother in Miss Pride's drawing-room, and thus, also, confused by the music and by the stranger in the Countess' lobby, had brushed off the dust of the forgotten incident and by a misapplication of the styles of sensation, compared the music to the sunlight of that past day, and remembered *Regenpfeifer* because I had been addressed in German."

I do not know what to call this if not a contemporary domestication of Proust. There is the same use of the elaborate and extended image, the same fascination with the arbitrary planes for time and memory, the same leisurely use of the plot to provide occasions for psychological generalizations about humanity. In *Boston Adventure* it is the incidental reflection even more than the plot itself which keeps a long novel eminently readable.

Plainly, *Boston Adventure* is by no means the traditional first novel. It is not autobiographical, it is not full of sound and fury, and it is not at all the careless composition of wild and untutored genius. On the

* There are a lot of other perhaps not accidental parallels between Miss Stafford's "I" and Proust's. Both begin by gazing with wonder and longing at symbols of society which they later occupy only to dissect. It is Miss Stafford's adroit domestication of Proust that makes Sonie's Meseglise Way the dome of the Boston state house, her Duchesse de Guermantes the impeccable Finckney St. spinster, Miss Pride.

contrary its virtues are precisely the reverse: its style is highly wrought and meticulous, its plotting—with the careful planting of clues and the almost ballet-like balance of its characters—is carefully contrived, and its imaginative creation, though it has the advantage of coming from a real involvement in the Boston world, is invention rather than recollection. Its weaknesses, as well, come from the defects of contrivance and invention. The characterization, though brilliant in its external finish, is not often very dense, and the big scenes and big emotions rarely come off with much real intensity. So *Hopestill's catastrophe* is perhaps the least authentic sequence in the novel, and when Sonie tells us that she was “ignited with jealousy” she does not remind us of Swann’s passion for Odette, or Marcel’s for Albertine. It is perhaps difficult to create passion out of invention alone.

Yet where the theme lies within the range of the muted style and of the natural insight which arises from Sonie’s tone of critical resignation, I do not think that the scenes could be much better done. So for my money the quiet desperation of the final scene, its calm presentation without underlining and without self-pity, is infinitely more terrifying than *Hopestill's disaster*. Nothing happens, except that we are able to share Sonie’s own clear but despairing view of her future. It has been long prepared. She has furnished out of random scraps from her memory a red room which she sees in moments of almost will-less trance. She describes the red room as a sanctuary for her spirit, but it is a sanctuary with the capacity of turning to nightmare, one which even in its comforting aspect terrifies her with the recollection of her mother’s split-witted mania. So we see her at the end with *Hopestill* dead, with her confidant Nathan Kadisch departed, without friends, with no escape but mania from the grasping and indestructible Miss Pride. The last words have an admirable but deadly restraint:

“She looked again as she had done when I was five years old in Chichester; her flat omniscient eyes seized me, grappled with my brain, extracted what was there, and her meager lips said, ‘Sonie, my dear, come out of the cold. You’ll never get to be an old lady if you don’t take care of yourself.’”

Certainly Sonie’s reaction to circumstance is not to be explained as that of the ordinary person subjected to extraordinary social pressures; it is that of the extraordinary person for whom any society might provide the particular arena of her suffering. In that sense hers is a private world; but it is a private world whose doors remain open at least to common sympathy. And at its best the private world is a whole and consistent one, unified by style, by tone which arises from character, and by the faithfulness of character itself to circumstance. It is at least another way of recommending a book to say that its best insight is independent of Boston, or even of any wider dilemma of contemporary society.

ANDREWS WANNING

THE HISTORY OF ROME HANKS. By Joseph Stanley Pennell. Charles Scribner's Sons. \$2.75

THE HISTORY OF ROME HANKS is a Book of the Dead. Joseph Pennell assembles as it were the torn bodies of his ancestors, not in loving piety, as Isis once gathered together the fourteen fragments of Osiris, but in corresponding fear for the integrity of his own body, about which he has a great deal to say. In its tribute to the grandfather, Rome Lycurgus Hanks, the novel makes reparation for the destructive, almost cannibalistic fantasies, which are its real reason for being. Although attended by fear, these fantasies are made psychically possible because they are shared with the readers, for whom they have similar value, and because they are projected back to historic events, to the battles of Shiloh and Gettysburg, where the bearded fathers fought. There occurred real slaughter as horrible as those imaginings with which Branwell Bronte, under the same compulsion as Pennell, used to thrill and frighten his sisters in the day dreams in common from which the sisters' novels evolved.

On another level *The History of Rome Hanks* is an attempt to master the fact of infinite suffering in its greatest intensity and most imaginatively repulsive forms. This is the alternative to finding strength in a responsible philosophic or political attitude. The Civil War was chosen as something both remote and familiar in which Pennell's ancestors had a part, something to be treated not as intelligible history but as an event of nature, like a flood or a hurricane. For Pennell the common soldiers of the North and South simply faced in opposite direction when they fought. The few Negroes we see are craven or corrupted. The issues of the war are cant in the mouths of ambitious politicians. Lincoln is mentioned only twice, and when we are shown political Washington, it is in the depths of the Grant administration. A historical novel like *The History of Rome Hanks* is necessarily about the present war as well, but it implies a present war in which world politics are an administrative matter for General Eisenhower and the State Department, and in which soldiers are technicians who survive or do not survive, and who suffer because it is man's lot to suffer.

Although Pennell's novel serves a political function, it does it by negation. Its great positive appeal is its imaginative exorcism of fear, even a very specific fear that underlies adolescent swagger and self-testing, and is widely, almost universally shared. The need Pennell has to explicate horror, the horrors of burial alive, of eyes eaten by maggots, of piles of intestines in the sun, of heads blown off by cannon and legs cut off by doctors, extends beyond the sphere of war, and as it does, a familiar pattern emerges.

There was necessarily much marrying of the forefathers in order that the author's double should be born, this empty young man who considers his childhood ailments more significant than his ideas, and who

calls a silly, affected young girl his Beatrice Portinari. But the ancestral couplings are forbidden to the imagination. The specifically sexual passages all deal with diseased prostitutes of the lowest order. Although they are chronologically impossible, scenes are included of Edinburgh medical schools in the days of the body snatchers. Pennell wants to describe the dissection of a young prostitute with whom the students had spent their nights. Toward the end an apparently irrelevant chapter shows a prostitute, on the same night the hero is born, dying of infection from an attempted abortion. A green tinge appears on her body precisely where a mat of moss had grown on a statue of Venus in a decaying garden in the South, in the most romantic section of the book. Sex is fascinating and repulsive; the political attitude has a genital archetype. On all levels there is withdrawal, and compensating fantasies of disruption.

Because Pennell is a fantasist of considerable imagination, some of the scenes, particularly the battle scenes, are very exciting. And he achieves emotion, or the appearance of emotion, by methods remarkably similar to the historic reconstruction in this novel. For in accomplished and eclectic imitation Pennell has caught the rhythms, the manners, the forms and phrases of the most significant writers of the last two decades, but writers who are obviously dead for him so far as all meaning is concerned. We recognize fragments of Joyce and Eliot and Pound, of Dos Passos, Anderson, Hemingway, Josephine Herbst, the shadows without the substance of most of those writers against whom official nationalist criticism has so violently turned in a period of spiritual uncertainty and withdrawal, a period of which this book is so characteristic an expression.

ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS

TIME MUST HAVE A STOP. By Aldous Huxley. Harper and Brothers. \$2.75.

AFTER waiting through if not always wading through a number of his novels in the hope that he might someday turn out something in line with the bright if rather indeterminate charm of his earlier days, it is pleasant to be able to report that with *Time Must Have a Stop* Aldous Huxley has rejoined the ranks of promising novelists to which *Chrome Yellow* first gave him entry.

As a matter of fact, the present work suggests a rewriting of the first. The period is very much the same, the action takes place during holidays on a never-never-land estate created for the purpose, this time in Florence. And the precocious and beautiful young hero writes verse and makes up phrases on all occasions. It is as if Huxley had taken *Crome Yellow* and said this is what was really going on then, this is what those people really were only I was too young to know it. If one laments the excellent light novelist that still cries like a lost child through Huxley's windy rages, one will not prefer this solidification of the soap bubble.

It may also be owing to the beneficent effects of having a subject he is anxious to get on with that he has happily scanted certain of the figures one has come to associate with the Huxleyan *oeuvre*. The man who began to talk in *Crome Yellow* and who has continued to talk with ever increasing range, vocabulary and inconsequence is killed off early in the book and the reader has only to deal with his departed spirit as it hangs, sometimes with quite impressive effect, between the material seductions of the earth and the great light of the Godhead. Other Huxleyan spectres are partially exorcised, though still present are the bitch, the vile wealthy old woman, good dull people, interior decoration, art and architecture, contumely of Proust, spiritualism and politics all decked out with a fair number of truths and a large number of amusing half-truths.

The story deals with the conversion of the handsome youth, Sebastian, from a life of sensuality and art to acceptance of the necessity for the destruction of the ego and union with God. An Italian anti-Fascist shows him the way. And as in any half way successful cautionary tale, nine-tenths of the book deals with the diverting and damning wickedness of the world and the last tenth is devoted to the hero's approach to the mystical life. This last tenth is presented under the cloak of epilogue to excuse the inexcusable time lapse of fifteen years, a frank admission of the extreme difficulty of showing the process of slow conversion. For, though Huxley has got himself a directive theme, he has got the one theme of all that is destructive of a fictive pattern. Fiction is above all personal and pictorial: mysticism is non-personal, non-pictorial. Simpler writers avail themselves of asses, whales and boils to get over the *impasse*. If he disdain these, or more delicately symbolic aids, it would seem that the true artist as well as the true mystic would not attempt to meld fiction and mysticism. But though he has talked inordinately about objects of art, Huxley has never shown much concern with the practice of art. He must always leave room for the dirty paws of the wolf moralist to show beneath the lambskin, this time, of the contemplative.

One notes this with a good deal of regret, for he has patently tried very hard to leash and sweeten his Calvinism. And it is because he has occasionally succeeded that one hopes well for the man after reading the book.

Here, in the anti-Fascist Rontini—more Quixote than partisan—he has drawn though conventionally still with a good deal of candor a man who has achieved “a condition of complete simplicity (Costing not less than everything).” This man tells Sebastian, “Find out how to become your inner not-self in God while remaining your outer self in the world.” Sufficiently high advice, sufficiently needed.

In the afore-mentioned epilogue, Sebastian ponders these and other of Rontini's words and tries to draw up by-laws for the Kingdom of God on earth. He would, one gathers, allow great art—Shakespeare, any-

way—though fully appreciative of its ambiguous effect on both creator and audience. He would allow marriage. He would disallow most action since even the best intended action leads to harm unless the doer of good is all good himself. At one point Sebastian considers “the excruciating problem of sound, honest, better-than-average goodness” and though he supplements the problem with well founded observations, though one readily enough allows a Bernard Iddings Bell to declaim that moral goodness does not in the least make up for separation from God—still, a good deal more affronted than amused, one calls a halt.

I suppose the difference is that one credits Mr. Bell with some knowledge of and belief in this goodness that he derogates. Huxley has never been able to create a character of even animal health. His notable attempts with Mark and Mary Rampion in *Point Counter-Point*, for all the documentation and description, cry aloud their author’s disbelief. His efforts at giving simple goodness its due in the present work constantly run afoul of his conviction that good morals presuppose bad taste and vice versa. And his versions of sin, a good back door to anybody’s conception of virtue, are so singularly lacquered and contrived, so confined within class moulds that they affect one more like the faces of the devil in old Italian confessionals where there were strings on the inside the priest could pull to contort the face—curiosities neither edifying nor titillating and remarkable chiefly for the fact that somebody once was scared of them.

Allowing for all improvements on his later novels, one is forced in 1944 to underline what Gide wrote of *Point Counter-Point*. Also a novelist, also a moralist and, one might add, an artist Gide wrote, “But what can I think of a book whose first seventy pages I read attentively without finding a single character firmly drawn, a single personal thought, emotion or sensation—not the slightest bait for the heart or the mind which might invite one to continue.” Though his trap has become progressively more exalted and is not lightly to be denied, Huxley’s bait remains what it has always been, aestheticism and methodological sensuality.

KATHERINE DE M. HOSKINS

LIE DOWN IN DARKNESS. By H. R. Hays. Reynal and Hitchcock. \$2.50.

BERNARD DE VOTO has charged the older writers with conspiring to represent American life as bleak and terrible whereas it is really beautiful and fine. Nobody, however, seems to pay any attention to Mr. De Voto. To judge by such recent examples of American fiction as *The Hunted*, *Strange Fruit*, *The Lost Week End* and *Dangling Man*, the new writers are as grim-sighted as their elders. In *Lie Down in Darkness* another young novelist submits to the influence of Lewis, Faulkner, Caldwell, Fitzgerald and Nathanael West as readily as if De Voto had never thundered. Mr. Hays even discovers terrors in an area of the national life

which has been little exploited by the more furious realists. His novel is about a New York suburb, the mere stuffiness of which is made to flare suddenly into outright violence. Hays shares with Faulkner and Caldwell a joy in extravagant caricature and deliberate outrageousness; like them he operates in a curious borderland of sensibility, half serious, half burlesque.

Lie Down in Darkness is written out of a frank loathing for its milieu and its characters and is therefore pure melodrama; it has all the intensity and well-known limitations of that approach. Margaret Schuyler, who murders her best friend in order to come into her fortune, is actuated by self-seeking malignancy and hasn't a virtue to her name. Yet her aggressiveness, her cruel snobberies and prejudices, make her a believable and even rather fearfully familiar type of woman. If she carries her special form of unpleasantness to the point of actual crime, that is because, as I take it, she is intended to represent the middle-class unconscious. By boldly working this principle, Mr. Hays succeeds in raising Margaret from a common case of the mean-spirited bourgeoisie to the stature of a murderess without violating the credibility of her character. It is true that *Lie Down in Darkness* is not quite a first-rate novel; but its shortcomings spring from the author's defective brilliance and not, as De Voto would probably say, from his pessimism. Writers today are seldom sufficiently free from intimate anxieties to see life steadily and see it whole. In Mr. Hays' rude version of suburban life there is some truth—enough, at any rate, to make a good novel.

F. W. DUPEE

CROSS-SECTION. *A collection of new American writing. Edited by Edwin Seaver. L. B. Fischer Publ. Corp. \$3.50*

THE BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES, 1944. *Edited by Martha Foley. Houghton Mifflin Co. \$2.75*

BETWEEN these latest collections of the "best" and the "new" in American writing, there is not much difference in either tone or quality, which is perhaps not quite as it should be, but probably, alas, no more than we can expect. The ambitions evident in either are fairly on a level; the "new" writers are by no means voices in the wilderness; they are not daring, experimental, or profound; scarcely any are not could-be, have-been, and will-be published writers, and published, what is more, in the very periodicals in which, "for one reason or another," they were not getting a hearing at the moment when Mr. Seaver sent out his call for the "worthwhile writing" he figured was around somewhere. It is still around somewhere, and a hundred fat bedside miscellanies like this could be sifted through for one small volume of real distinction.

This is not to say that this collection fails conspicuously; there is some robust emotionalism (especially on behalf of the Negro), able and sometimes even sophisticated writing. For power and imagination, how-

ever, no one here approaches Ira Wolfert, whose story "My Wife The Witch" (like his novel of a year or so ago, *Tucker's People*) proves him notable; he is exact without being hard, compassionate without being sentimental, and has sustained, for all his naturalism, a serious vision of what can only be called the poetry and drama of the soul; he perceives and projects without pretension and with complete authority. Perhaps mention ought also to be made of Christopher Lazare's "Last Visit," a knowing, if derivative, psychological study.

In Martha Foley's collection the stories from *The New Yorker* and *Harper's Bazaar* run neck and neck this year, with *PARTISAN REVIEW* slow but strong in the rear. Carson McCullers, set squarely in the centre with the longest story of all, running to some sixty pages, has written an interesting piece, in her strictly dazzle-for-sensation mode. She has called it a ballad, which was sensible, since she has, in such a title, a precedent for the kind of strangeness and arbitrary violence of which she writes in this tall story, riddled with perversity, irrelevant if engaging color, pontifical and self-conscious remarks about human nature; all the evil told with a kind of cute and terribly clever reasonableness.

Apart from the superficial liveliness of Miss McCullers's story, perhaps the three most serious and superior pieces are those that appeared in *PARTISAN REVIEW*: Lionel Trilling's "Of This Time, Of That Place," Saul Bellow's "Dangling Man," and H. J. Kaplan's "The Mohammedans," all revolving about the theme of disinheritance and dislocation. Bellow's consists of excerpts from a novel already thoroughly examined in the critical press, and is best considered in its proper and intended frame; Trilling's is the quietly competent, telling account of a doomed struggle between good and evil perhaps, the plight of a rich, disordered intelligence in a academic world which can find no place for it; Kaplan's a brilliant if too strikingly Kafkaesque story, richly inventive, full of despair, rage and humor, and the expected attitudes of the master.

Helen Eustis has a sure hand with delicate feelings, in a rather conventional story which brings her far from the realm (also Kafkaesque) in which she first aroused one's interest and pleasure; Vladimir Nabokov is represented by a story in his best Continental style, the whole brightly unreal; George Stiles by a heavy story from the *Kenyon Review*, over-written and highly pretentious, but with indications of much ability; Dorothy Canfield by some Frenchmen-in-the-hands-of-Germans schmaltz, which is nevertheless fairly effective. The rest of the stories fill out the book nicely, with sentimentality, local color, contrivance and *New Yorker* pedestrianism.

GERTRUDE BUCKMAN

Variety

Impractical Man

THE WORLD will never get it into its head that to call a man impractical is, under certain conditions, to bestow upon him the highest of praise. I say "under certain conditions" for I, too, am practical. But when something is at stake—honor and politics—I admire the man who will concede nothing—and spoil nothing—Gaetano Salvemini.

He has been called, I should imagine, one of the greatest living Italians, one of the truest and the best anti-Fascists and, if nothing else, the only liberal who lends dignity and pride to that diminishing name. But it is for others, who know him better, to praise and evaluate. I know Salvemini only as an impractical man.

I met him at an informal gathering of press and radio representatives—men who have the drop on history because they get the news ten minutes before everyone else. They were to ask questions about developments in Italy (it was shortly after the invasion of the Italian mainland) and Salvemini was to answer and lead the evening's discussion.

He came late, which, as the world will never understand, is something of a virtue in itself. The discussion began. The audience asked questions and Salvemini sat

in a straight chair in the front of the room and answered them. There were many interruptions of considerable heat; it was a good evening.

Among those present was a compatriot of Salvemini's, a certain public official and leader in the community whose anonymity I had better preserve, but whom, for the sake of substance, I shall call Squarcigalupo. Squarcigalupo—it is an occupational facility—has a way of establishing himself. He brooded over the discussion, shook head and jowl, and made it plain, simply by sitting there and not saying a word, exactly what his position was. When he came to clear his throat before asking his first question, we all stopped speaking of our own accord, knowing what to expect, and he had a moment of perfect silence to himself. An official can do something with a simple throat-clearing in a silent moment which we should all admire. You hear readying sounds, a meshing of gears, the 'A' of the administrative instrument, the moving of cabinets and desks into place over smooth floors.

"Professor Salvemini," began Squarcigalupo, in a voice I will soon describe, "don't you think Baddoglio can be of great practical value to the Allies in preserving law and order?"

Salvemini replied that he certainly did not think so.

"But what would you do? Whom would you deal with? You have to have someone who can wear the trappings of authority."

There is more than a little cynicism in the word "trappings." And when an official speaks cynically of officialdom, when he takes you, so to speak, into his little room off the main corridor, he has only one motive—to patronize. Such is the way one dedicates a flagpole, addresses a boys' club, greets a delegate of a furriers' singing society.

It didn't work. "Mr. Squarcigalupo," declared Salvemini, "Badoglio is a Fascist. Fascism is discredited in Italy. What is Badoglio? He is a rag . . ."

Now about voices. Squarcigalupo spoke in a bass clarinet, round, measured, phrased. He said "uh" and "ah" in a manner profoundly and magisterially grave, pausing, qualifying, distributing his weight, shaking his jowl, pursing his lips, frowning. He spoke the English of a well set New York official, sententious and bronchial and slightly incorrect—you thought of night school, of elocution and diligent self-improvement, of the grinding polish and the slow ascent, street by street and position by position, until he had reached the point where he was accustomed to clearing his throat in silence. He called Salvemini "Professor".

Salvemini spoke Italian. English, of course, but Italian. His voice was shrill, his words were broken up by trailing vowels. He gesticulated, using his hands, arms, legs, eyes, lips, teeth, head, cheeks, the

reflection of his glasses and the point of his beard. He popped out of his seat, shot forth, sputtered and burned. He ignored the proper title and called Squarcigalupo "Mister".

And so much greater was his dignity! Here, these two men, both of them immigrant, both from Southern Italy, both in America, between them the whole national scope. And one had a frog in his voice—though he spoke perfect official English—an ugly little toad that jumped out of his mouth and croaked: "be practical, consider, if, but, whereas, authority, authority." And the other had scorn, high scorn: "Badoglio is a fascist, a rag, a rat, criminal and vile. Who dares say a word in his behalf? Fascism is discredited in Italy, the Italian people are sick of it—what more need be said? Authority—what authority? Authority is guilt. The lowest Sicilian bootblack, ask him, he knows. The King? Order? The Vatican? Ask the bootblack!"

"But, but, but—be practical!"

"Mr. Squarcigalupo," said Salvemini, losing patience at last, drawing himself up and pointing in no uncertain direction—"Fascism is dead. There are no more Fascists in Italy. Alla the Fascists are in *New York*!"

This is dignity. It is the dignity of having nothing to retract, nothing to explain, no qualification to make, nothing to spoil. It is the dignity, straight and pure and simple, of the truth—Fascism is dead, and I have helped kill it.

ISAAC ROSENFELD

Word Surrealism

IS IT NOT characteristic of the ideological confusion of our time that the terms best describing social forms not fully understood are surrealist combinations in which a negative adjective cancels out the formal meaning?

For if we ignore for the moment the contemporary context, we may well ask how anyone in his pure semantical senses can use such phrases as *secular religion* or *totalitarian liberal* or *monopolistic competition* or *democratic corporativism*? It is sheer jabberwocky. Yet only Alice in the Political Wonderland makes sense today.

It is quite to the point that these four basic word combinations revolve about the two key concepts of the epoch: communism and capitalism. The first two are bastard derivations of communism, the other two are extensions of capitalism. Both capitalism and communism have developed along such skewed lines that we can only bring them into focus by straining our logic to these surrealist snapping points.

Historically, secular is usually counterposed to religious, each denoting varying, if not antagonistic, ways of life.

Yet *secular religion* makes sense. For how else can one understand the merging of rationality with religious faith which characterizes the Soviet ideology. The Soviet system exists today outside the traditional forms of religion, yet displays the major feature of a religion dominated society—the obliteration

of all distinctions between the 'sacred' and the 'profane,' whether in art, ideology or government.

A number of recent books illustrate this point. Harold Laski in his latest volume seeks to combine faith and reason to proclaim a new civilization. Russia becomes a new "calling" and the world is exhorted to heed its vast powers of evocation. Significantly, Laski invokes a parallel with the rise of Christianity to illustrate the power of this all-embracing faith. Joseph Freeman's *Never Call Retreat*, apart from its phony theatricalism, is valuable for its contrast of two Communists, Kurt and Hans, one a poet the other a party functionary. Here we have a picture of the party man in its most stylized form, the tough, disciplined soldier of the cause who subordinates everything to his party tasks. Kurt the poet, attracted to Communism by its idealism, is appalled, rebels but actually in the end accepts the harness.

It is an interesting aspect of Communist propaganda throughout the world that the Communist leader is portrayed as the heroic, alert, self-sacrificing Spartan. (Rarely do we get the other side, the description for example, of the decaying André Marty in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*). The Communist is portrayed as a proletarian, an activist, a man sprung from the heroic masses. The propagandized image of Tito, the Yugoslav partisan leader, conforms closely to this idealized portrait.

The most striking story illustrating the conversion process in operation is Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*,

the imaginative portrayal of the Moscow Trials. For in Rubashov the old Bolshevik we see the inexorable evolution of the rational Marxist into the religious Communist. Rubashov himself can never fully accept the change, but he does understand that the end-point of his logic is a secular religion, and so he makes the historical sacrifice and confesses. (In this connection, notice how the religious terminology drenches the Socialist language: the *vision* of Socialism, the *cause*; and for God we have historical necessity, *vide* Harold Laski.)*

The principle established in the discussion of *secular religion* applies also to the word *surrealisms*.

* Perhaps the closest prototype of the Bolshevik leader was Ernest Wollweber, the real boss of the former German Communist Party. (For reference see Valtin's *Out of the Night* and Kurt Singer's *Duel for the Northland*.) Wollweber, a hardbitten fanatical functionary, held the organizational reins of the party. A proletarian, he boasted of his origins and despised the intellectuals as weak and dilettantish. Yet the Communists, more than any other group, have exploited the intellectual. For in this highly political world, people increasingly are suspicious of politics and turn to men who hold out a moral pretense. The Communists have grasped this and have sought novelists, poets and theologians as the initial figureheads of front groups. These men supposedly have a moral authority drawn from their individual conscience and not from organizational build-ups. Thus we find the Croat poet Vladimir Nazor used as one of the first leaders of the Tito movement; Erich Weinert, the poet, made chairman of the Moscow Free German Committee and Wanda Wassielewska, the novelist, as head of the Union of Polish Patriots.

The *totalitarian liberal* is one who voices the liberal tradition, yet through his action helps create the totalitarian society. The most common species is the fellow-traveler, the man who feels that Russia is on the "right road." Outwardly the liberal, inwardly he becomes the apologist for the slave state. The mechanism of transference has long been a tantalizing problem. The answer, I feel, lies in the 'lure of power politics,' that wonderfully gratifying sense of entering the in-nards of history. How else can one explain the pigeon-pouting piece by Bruce Bliven in *The New Republic* some months back entitled "The Hang-Back Boys," which takes to task the radicals for not accepting the "two centers of dynamic energy in the world today, Roosevelt and Russia." This peculiar 'wave of the future' line runs from the hysterical screeches of *PM*, which denounces all those who dare criticize the Administration, through the liberal weeklies, who criticize Robert Murphy but not the President who appointed him, down to Alfred Kantorowicz in the *Free World* who, in a nauseating article, glorified the Moscow Free German Committee and pointed triumphantly as an example of its national unity to the instance of Willi Bredel, the Communist poet, sitting cheek by jowl with an SS officer who commanded the concentration camp where he was once tortured.

Turning to the other side of this situation, again the facts of social life are best explained by these semantic gargoyles. The phrase *monopolistic competition* has been

popularized among economists by Joan Robinson and Edward Chamberlin. Sometimes it is called imperfect competition or oligopoly (oligopoly is to monopoly what oligarchy is to monarchy), but neither of these phrases do as full justice as the first to the structure of the American economy. We live in an economy in which each basic industry is dominated by a few giants who regulate competition through gentlemen's price agreements, a magic mechanism which simultaneously punches holes in the theories of the classical economists and keeps Adam Smith turning in perpetual motion in his grave. The automobile industry is dominated by a Big Three who maintain established price ranges and scales; steel is run on a basing point system with all companies huddling under the price umbrella erected by U. S. Steel; in oil, aluminum, chemicals and other major sectors of American industry, the situation is the same.

And where is American capitalism heading? Towards a *democratic corporativism* or what I have defined in another connection as the Monopoly State, a system whereby industry and labor are locked together under contractual compulsion by the State and forced along a line of ill-defined national interest. The war economy itself is a neat example of this democratic corporativism.

It goes without saying that the adherents of each group cited will protest the ridiculousness of this surrealist dream. After all, the secular religion is communism; the totalitarian liberal is only a prog-

ressive; monopolistic competition is free enterprise and democratic corporativism is social planning.

But as Henry Miller dryly observed:

... the reason we go to the movies or skip the movies, or get drunk, the reason we read detective stories or switch now and then to Marcel Proust and Thomas Mann, the reason we have International Business Machines and the Bible Society ... the reason we are at war though there never was a period in history when people as a whole were less interested in war. The reason is ... we have reached a point where black and white are interchangeable. To the man in the street it makes no difference whether you talk elephants or cuspids—they are identical ... we can no longer give meaning and significance to events. The color has gone out of life and with it the drama. We are left with the sound and fury of emptiness ...

The last war brought surrealism in art and rationalism in politics; we now have a neo-classicist revival in art and the emergence of word surrealism in politics. The secret is locked in the dialectic and Marx lies on his head in the grave.

DANIEL BELL

Are You PM-Minded?

OF THE newspaper *PM* it can be said that its "inner life" consists of liberal-reformist pleas and reveries, but that its objective framework is that of acceptance of the existing social order and acquiescence in the new American imperialism. We know that imperialism abroad has been paired,

historically, with "popular reformism" at home. But this new American imperialism, appearing so late upon the scene (a scene to which another determining element, the fascist technique, has been added), can be expected to produce an abortively "original" reformism. With our nineteenth-century capitalism fading into a museum-piece, the formal expression and design of the social order will become increasingly "modern," all of it catching up with Hollywood. *PM* is simply one of the more obnoxious outcomes of this special historical situation.

PM's relation to Stalinism is significant because of the latter's dual—reformist and totalitarian—character. The newspaper generally adheres to the Stalinist line, though at times it is "critical" of both program and leadership. It is under no compelling bond to use the more extreme absurdities of a line created by remote control. Because of their totalitarian source, the Stalinists operate with a more rigid logic than the *PM*-ers, who are closer to the tradition of sloppy liberal thinking. (They have retained very little of the good in that tradition—aside from the useful habit of muckraking; and some fancy words from the democratic dictionary, which, unless one has never heard them before, are about equal to zero.) *PM* is a local variation of Stalinism, representing its sensitive rather than its mechanical adaptation to the American milieu.

Sam Grafton and Max Lerner are, I believe, the main stylistic

sources of *PM*. The former is the fount of that cute "simplification," or sophisticated baby-talk, which has crept into so much liberal writing—an attempt to make banalities palatable. His column appears in the *Chicago Sun*, but not in Marshall Field's New York outlet. *PM* reprints the really good ones, though: "We have reached the stage now where a good sneeze will finish off the Vichy government in France." He's quite talented at this sort of thing. I wish he'd do *Barnaby*; or Eve Merriam's *Short Snorts*.

But Grafton is seen to be a lightweight indeed, compared to Max Lerner. Max Lerner writes books about ideas; he also engages in other intellectual pursuits. For instance, he makes up fairy tales. He recited one over the radio, not long ago, called "Fable of the Skulls." It begins: "Once upon a time there was a man in Germany," and it tells about how this little fellow wanted to be big. "And so he built himself a mound of skulls" and then little guys in a lot of countries did the same thing, "but there was one country, the United States, that had a peculiar prejudice against letting people build mounds of skulls." But I had to change the station just when the fairy tale got to the part about Don't cash in your War Bonds, you're cashing in your country (or something), and didn't hear the end.

Max Lerner is not simply "fantastical," though. When the gods conferred at Cairo and Teheran, he wrote one of those editorials of his. I'm sorry to say it was largely devoted to enthusiastic nonsense.

But he did offer up the next to last paragraph to certain 'unsolved problems,' like India. Then he concluded: "But this is jumping far ahead of the story. For the story is a serial, and a good serial, and a good serial reader must learn to contain his impatience while he enjoys his suspense. And what magnificent serial writers the United Nations powers and their leaders are." We lost politics at about the second bounce. It's like an easy and interesting game, you see. And the 5,000,000 Indians dead of famine must enjoy their "suspense," patiently rotting in British-dug graves, while the next round of the game is prepared . . . or while Max Lerner writes another editorial, with his affectedly naive style, mildly manufacturing "sincere logic," which consists mainly in the use of popular figures that catch on quickly; the repetition of a word or rhythm in successive clauses, rocking the reader into a nice feeling of security; and the sweet aura of a hopeful commonsense that will surely carry us through.

The opening paragraph of an editorial by I. F. Stone called "Meet John Smith" is a classic expression of a strain that permeates the entire mentality of *PM*-ism: "Meet John Smith. He cannot be described as an imaginary character, since there are 11,000,000 of him in uniform." Alternative pseudonyms are Joe Doakes, G. I. Joe or Josephine, etc. These have a delightful feel of simplicity and concreteness: Just another guy, like anybody else. Actually, they are just simple: by no strain of the

imagination can they be considered concrete. They are, in fact, the wildest, most unwarranted abstractions that a first adventurer into theory could dream up. But notice how Stone insists that "John Smith" is not an "imaginary character." This whole technique of simulating realistic thought is part of something larger among *PM*-ers — their chummy, oversimple attitude, with which they seem to be saying, "We're no better than you, we scratch under the arm, yawn at concerts," and so on.

PM's attempt to bridge (or ignore) the class contradictions of its audience, leading as it does to a simplistic and hazy kind of populism, is responsible for much of the paper's cultural vulgarity. In neither art nor politics can folksy journalism overcome the elements of alienation in society. But *PM* tries all the same. Examples: 1) the "OK, Joe?"—cheesecake they print every week: "We just can't get Esther Williams off our minds, Joe. You and us both, eh?" Just as if they graduated from the same whorehouse together. 2) Two adjacent photographs, the first of a handsome Frenchwoman who "wears a bathing costume made of mottled green parachute silk. This invasion material is much sought after in France." The other is of a pitiful refugee family, one of the several millions on the roads of Europe.

In the entire American press, probably the all-around worst column is William McCleery's "DEAR JOE" letter that appears

in the Sunday Magazine Section of *PM*. It is signed "yours as always, BILL, William Jennings O'Brien". In the thing that got in the July 2 issue, BILL is concerned over a possible schism between soldiers and civilians after the war: "Then, as always, it will be the good guys vs. the bad guys. And already the bad guys are trying to split the good guys apart." Toward the end he gets nostalgic: "But some day the last Kraut will yell *Kamerad* and the last Nip will blow his poor miseducated brains out and the war will be over. And you will come home."

How long, do you think, before BILL "will blow his poor miseducated brains out"?

A desperate friend of mine who worked on *PM* for a short while tells me this is the question standing first with *PM*-ers: "Is this guy *PM*-minded?"—a question which sums up all that they are or ever will be.

The following editorial warning was part of a prologue to 6 pages of threatening Depression photos, printed while *PM* was stumping for the Kilgore Bill (August 9): "An unhappy America, economically awry and socially unstable, will hardly be a Good Neighbor, almost certainly will be tempted to ease its internal tensions by imperialist forays abroad." Not today, you see—but tomorrow, maybe. The *PM* mentality is not simply philistine: it is eclectic, and will utilize any kind of critical idea. But always incorrectly—epigone-fashion. They cut off ideas from their moorings and exhibit them like toy-balloons. They sell words,

make commodities out of ideas. Nothing is dirtier.

DAVID T. BAZELON

Movie Notes

"Honesty is the best policy," is a reliable thematic standby of Hollywood that turns up again, feeble but resolute, as the substance of Mr. Preston Sturges' *Hail the Conquering Hero*, a dishonest, unfunny, a-human "comedy" that works like a miner in a landslide trying to look honest, to be funny and to seem "human." The effort is carried on *a la* Frank Capra, whom Mr. Sturges increasingly resembles; a little more of the sentimental in his next script and a role for Walter Brennan in it and the two men will be about as indistinguishable as Fox Movietone News and MGM's News of the Day.

In farce, a character forced to play a role that humiliates and torments him is sure to arouse high merriment; if his antagonists are six heroic Marines (cheers) who are animated by a desire to see him restored to his mother, the finished production is practically in the cans. To add to the fun, Mr. Sturges has embellished his young hero with a bad case of hay fever, that hilarious ailment, and saves his greatest flourish of energy for a homecoming sequence that features such novel laugh-getters as two bands playing at once, endless cut-in shots of Franklin Pangborn mopping his brow and looking harried, and the greatest array

of stock-pattern small-town types I have ever seen crammed into one movie. Sturges' manic handling of Raymond Walburn as the excitable Mayor of the town would be embarrassing in a junior high school operetta. But perhaps the most offensive aspect of *Hail the Conquering Hero* is the wallowing self-congratulatory air with which Sturges embraces his two-faced relationship to his material. His witless exploitation and *pretended* kidding of a sadistic Marine with a mother fixation, for example, is perfectly balanced by a cinema mother who might have come off the top of a box of Martha Washington candy. Sturges' strategy is to fortify every cliché in the book, while his slapstick, unconvincingly masquerading as satire, thuds and thumps and never runs down.

What little of the hideousness and horror of the war that Hollywood has eyedroppered into its releases has been received by audiences with marked distaste; the shying-away from war films—or for that matter anything even remotely touching on reality—has become so sharply felt at the box-office that the new production schedules call for more and more “comedies,” musicals, and uplift pieces. The motion picture industry's most relished statement on the war, so far as audiences are concerned, is no doubt to be found in the cretinous gagging of *Hail the Conquering Hero*. It has been enormously successful.

Though it is true that an actor portraying the twenty-eighth President of the United States unquestionably appears in Mr. Zanuck's

Technicolored *Wilson*, it is more to the point, I think, to regard it as a musical picture—somewhat in the tradition of those films with Alice Faye or Betty Grable, in which a song-and-dance vaudevillian is tenderly chronicled from lowly tank-circuit endeavors to final achievement on the Big Time. Music is, indeed, the *subject* of *Wilson*, its garish figure in the carpet. A trumpet might very well appear on the main title. According to the advertisements for the film, eighty-seven “beloved songs” are played or sung in *Wilson*; and though I got the impression that there were even more than eighty-seven, it serves no purpose to question Mr. Zanuck's figure. For three-quarters of this long and soporific picture, which cost three-and-a-half million dollars, an approximation of history carries on a losing battle with vocal, orchestral, or band renditions of *Put on Your Old Gray Bonnet*, *Hail to the Chief*, *Over There*, *I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier*, and the eighty-three others, most of them executed by one of the most ear-shattering brass sections of all time. Vocal choruses of *By the Light of the Silvery Moon*, as rendered by the Wilson family around the parlor piano, are more searchingly documented than the First World War, which is brushed off rather hurriedly by way of some old newsreel clips showing Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford and Marie Dressler drumming up business for the Liberty Bond Drive, and quick glances at farmerettes, General Pershing, and parades. From the film's opening scene, a

tender slow pan shot of the Princeton campus, until Wilson leaves the White House, its hero is rushed about to football and baseball games (episodes which perform the double duty of establishing Wilson as a not untypical American lover of sport, and giving the band a chance to play good and loud), to a variety theatre (where some more music can be dragged in and where Wilson's reactions to Lew Dockstader and Eddie Foy point up his zest for the theatre), and to such Sousa-havens as political rallies.

Somewhere around Reel Nine, *Wilson* settles down to (a) convincing its audience of the nobility of America's aims in fighting World War I, (b) absolving the American people of guilt in the League of Nations fight, and (c) converting that tragic affair into a matter of personalities, with Wilson as messiah and Henry Cabot Lodge as villain. Such a significant figure in Wilson's life as Colonel House is seen so briefly that if your eyes leave the screen for a moment, you are apt to miss him entirely. Most of the other historical figures dart on and off with the speed of waterbugs. Wilson's own chilly, complex, eccentric, theological-seminary characteristics are scrapped for more genial and photogenic ones; he becomes a family man who occasionally has to pay a visit to the office to straighten out a few business matters. As for what was responsible for the economic and political nightmare of the period 1914-1920, there is only one explanation: Germany.

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